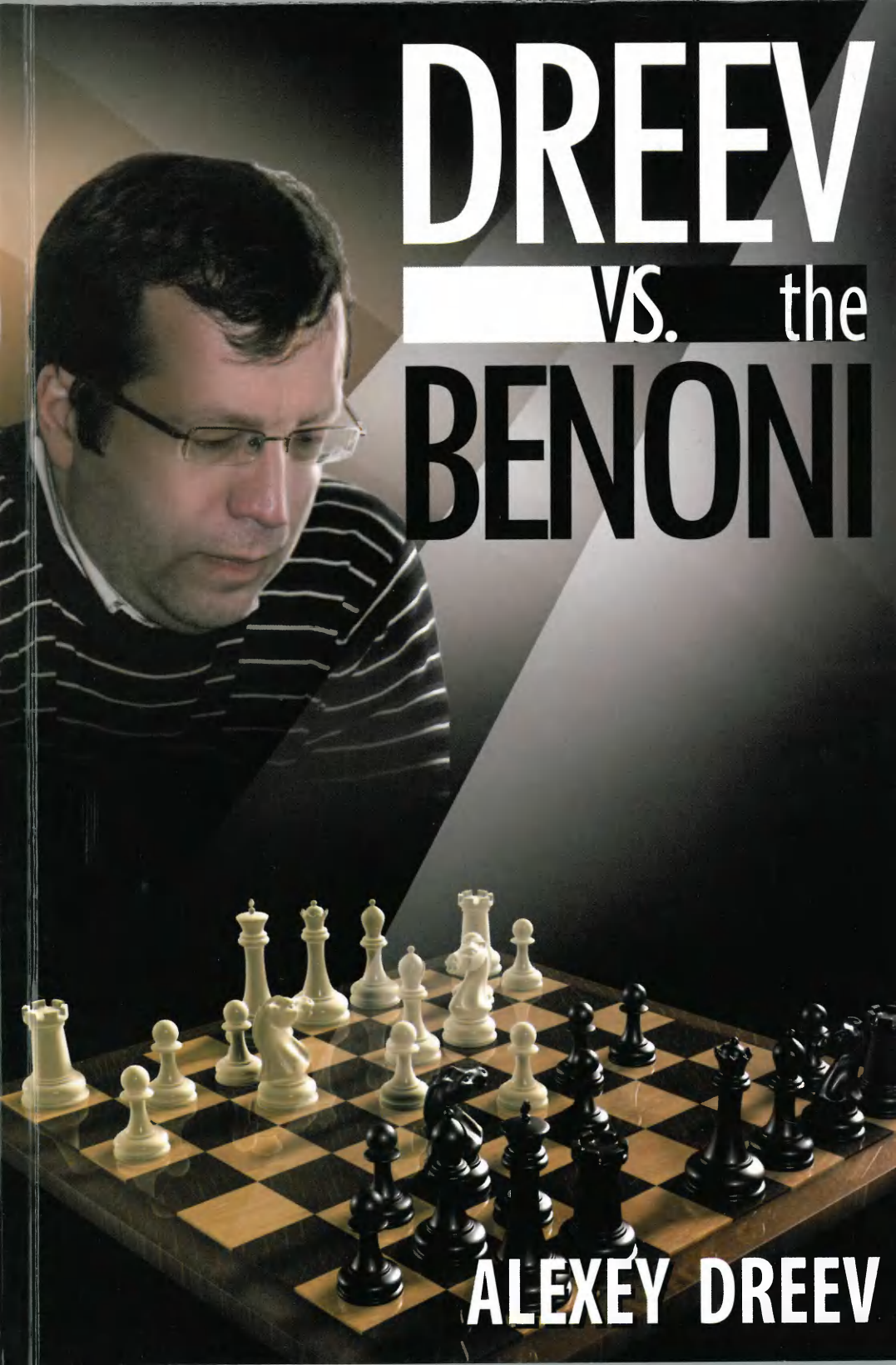




DREEV

VS.

the

BENONI

ALEXEY DREEV



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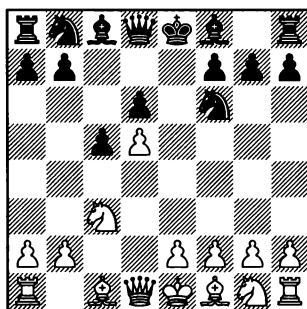
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1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6 4.♗c3 g6

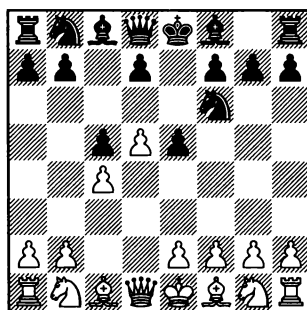
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PREFACE

This book is devoted to a topical subject in contemporary chess – White's fight against the Modern Benoni Defence. The Benoni Defence can in fact be divided into two main structures, which are very different in concept: the Modern Benoni, **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♗c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6**



and the Czech (or Old) Benoni **1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5;**



we shall treat the latter only cursorily in this book; it is very passive, so we shall not analyse it as extensively.

During the first half of the 20th century the Queen's Gambit was predominant among the closed openings (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♘f6). For example, if you look at the famous match for the World Champion-

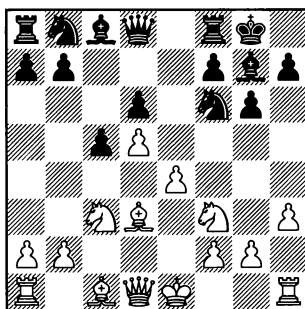
ships in Buenos Aires in 1927 between Capablanca and Alekhine, these adversaries mostly played the Queen's Gambit, as both White and Black. Black usually reaches solid and safe positions in this way, but he has only minimal chances of seizing the initiative.

However, some players wanted to be able to play for a win with Black in the closed openings and so around the middle of the 20th century some openings were actively developed in which the symmetry, so typical of the structures of the Queen's Gambit, is disrupted at an early stage. This period saw a boom in the development of the King's Indian Defence (1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6), the Gruenfeld (1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5), the Nimzo-Indian (1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4) and the Modern Benoni. The latter can lead to very complicated and dynamic positions and Black has great chances of seizing the initiative. Its popularity began to grow, peaking in the second half of the 20th century, when such great players as Tal, Fischer, Kasparov and many other famous grandmasters included it in their opening repertoire as Black, while Gligoric was among the greatest advocates of White's chances in this structure.

We should mention that in those days White's space advantage, which is of an enduring nature, was somewhat underestimated. We are all living now in the computer era, and this has affected chess as well; chess programs have progressed so much in their ability to analyse positions and variations that many well-known theoretical schemes have had to be considerably re-evaluated over the last ten to fifteen years. This certainly applies to the positions arising from the Modern Benoni.

Black can reach the main line of the Modern Benoni in either of two main move orders: 2...c5 3.d5 e6, or 2...e6 3.♖f3 c5 4.d5 exd5. I should like to emphasise right away that the correct move order is very important for White. Sometimes he should develop his bishop on d3 first and sometimes he should preface this with h3. This considerably reduces Black's possibilities and, as we shall see, it deprives him of any chance to organize meaningful counterplay.

The idea of the order of moves I am recommending is to force Black to follow a narrow path and to prevent him from creating active counterplay. For example after 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♗c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3! ♙g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♖f3,



if Black plays 9...a6 then White continues with 10.a4! Instead, if Black tries the active move 9...b5, then after some long forcing lines he is reduced to fighting at best for a draw, with no prospects of achieving clear equality or of seizing the initiative.

It should be sufficient to mention that the players who defend Black's side at the top level are very careful in choosing when to play the Modern Benoni, since White's space advantage is of a long-term character. For example, the former World Champion Garry Kasparov, who used to play the Benoni in tournaments, did not risk trying it even once in all his matches for the World Championship against Anatoly Karpov. On the other hand, relatively recently Kasparov, in a "simul" game against Vazquez Cruz (Mexico 2010) reached the main position which we analyse in this book, albeit from a slightly different move order: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6 4.♗c3 g6 5.e4 ♙g7 6.♗f3 0-0 7.h3 e6 8.♙d3 exd5 9.cxd5, thus confirming how important and fashionable this position is.

The Czech Benoni has always been much less popular compared to the Modern Benoni, mostly owing to the fact that it is less dynamic. The game is closed and is mostly positional. White enjoys a long-term space advantage and his position is much more pleasant, since Black has great problems creating active counterplay.

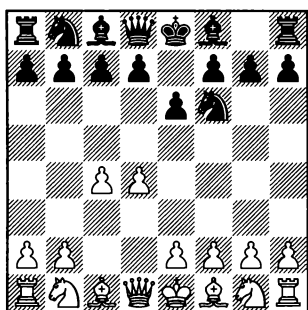
In this book I have analysed all Black's possible responses that deserve attention and in a great many variations I have suggested promising possibilities for White which are new to theory.

Alexey Dreev

Part 1

Some move order nuances for the White player against the Modern Benoni in order to reach the main tabia

The Modern Benoni via the move order 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6

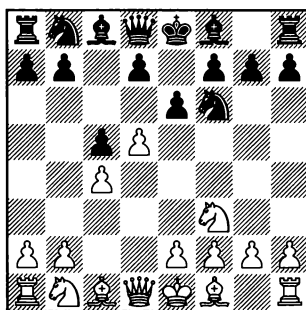


3.♟f3

White chooses this order of moves quite frequently with the idea of avoiding the Nimzo-Indian Defence, which is possible after 3.♟c3 ♟b4. In contemporary chess it has the reputation of being one of Black's most reliable defences against 1.d4.

On the other hand, if Black plans to play the Modern Benoni, he has many more possibilities after 3.♟f3 than after 3.♟c3. Still, White does not need to give up the idea of following "our scheme", as you will soon be convinced...

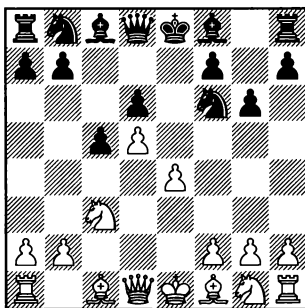
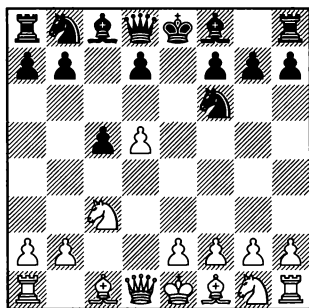
3...c5 4.d5!?



This transformation to a King's Indian pawn-structure characteristic of the Modern Benoni, in contrast to the moves 4.e3 and 4.♟c3, is considered to be White's most energetic method of fighting for an opening advantage.

4...exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♟c3 g6 7.h3! (it is inaccurate for White to play 7.e4, because of 7...a6 – see Chapter 2, variation **A1**) **7...♟g7 8.e4 0–0 9.♟d3** and we have reached the main tabia of the Modern Benoni.

The Modern Benoni via the move order 1.d4 ♢f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♜c3 exd5 5.cxd5



In this position only the move 5...♞d6 (Chapter 3) leads to original positions.

It is just plain bad for Black to play 5...g6 6.e4 ♞g7? (it is preferable to opt for 6...d6 7.♞d3 – see 5...d6), because of 7.e5.

Whenever White enters the Modern Benoni via this move order, he should be very careful about choosing the right moment to develop his king's knight to f3. We will see what the correct move order is to reach the main tabia (Part 2).

5...d6 6.e4 g6 (for 6...♞bd7 7.♞f3 – see Chapter 1, variation **B2e**; for 6...♞a6 7.♞f3 – see Chapter 1, variation **B2f**; for 6...♞e7 7.♞f3 – see Chapter 1, variation **B2c**, 6...♞e7 7.e4)

(diagram)

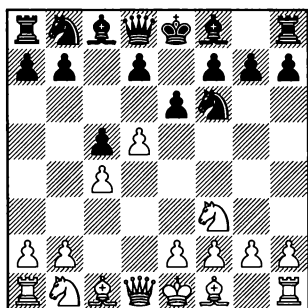
7.♞d3! (It is inaccurate for White to play 7.♞f3?! owing to 7...

a6! – we shall discuss in detail why this is not so good for White in Chapter 2 via the move order 2...e6 3.♞f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♞c3 g6 7.e4 a6!) **7...♞g7** (7...a6 8.a4 ♞g7 9.h3 0-0 10.♞f3 – see Chapters 7-8) **8.h3 0-0** (8...a6 9.a4 0-0 10.♞f3 – see Chapters 7-8) **9.♞f3** and we have reached the main tabia of the Modern Benoni.

There is an analogous nuance, when White needs to delay the development of his knight, in the variation **5...d6 6.e4 a6 7.a4 g6** and now he should play **8.♞d3** and after **8...♞g7 9.h3 0-0 10.♞f3** we reach positions which we cover in Chapters 7-8. (It would be inaccurate for White to play 8.♞f3?! in view of 8...♞g4, as we have pointed out in Chapter 2 – see 6...g6 7.e4 a6 8.a4 ♞g4).

Chapter 1

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5



In this chapter we shall analyse Black's attempt to postpone the exchange of pawns in the centre: **A) 4...d6**, and the immediate transfer to the pawn structure of the Modern Benoni with **B) 4...exd5**.

A) 4...d6

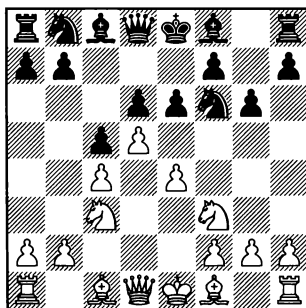
I should tell you immediately that Black does not gain much from postponing the exchange on d5. Nevertheless, this move-order is often encountered in practice. Sometimes Black plays this way so that he can avoid the possibility of White continuing after 4...exd5 5.cxd5 d6 with 6.e4 g6 (6...♘xe4?? 7.♙a4+) 7.♙d3, delaying the development of his knight to c3 for a while.

5.♘c3 g6

The move 5...♙e7?! enables White to play 6. e4± and it is not easy to understand how, after the pawn-exchanges in the centre on the d5-square, Black can prevent White from capturing exd5, which will provide him with a solid positional advantage.

After 5...exd5 6.cxd5, Black transposes safely to the variations analysed in section **B**.

6.e4

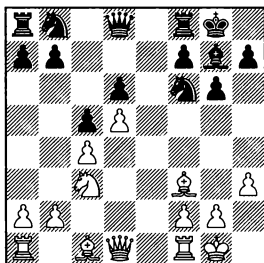


6...♙g7

It is no improvement for Black to opt for 6...exd5, since White can recapture with the other pawn – 7.exd5! (avoiding the variations 7.cxd5 a6!? 8.a4 ♙g4!=, or 8.h3

2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 d6 5.♟c3 g6 6.e4 ♔g7 7.h3 0-0 8.♟d3

b5!?∞) and Black will have nothing better than 7...♟g4 (7...♟g7?! 8.♟e2+ ♜f8 9.♟d1±, or 9.h3±; 8...♟e7?! 9.♟f4±). In this variation, after 8.♟e2 ♟g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 ♟xf3 11.♟xf3,



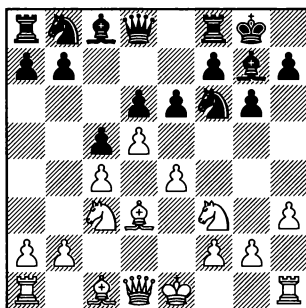
there arises a well-known theoretical position in which White has a slight but very stable positional advantage, thanks to his extra space; furthermore White's powerful bishop-pair will help him exploit this advantage. In the game Fressinet – Morozevich, Sun Huan 2010, there followed 11...♟bd7 12.♟c2 ♜h8 (12...a6 13. a4 ♟e8 14.a5 ♟c7 15.♟d2 ♟e7 16. ♟fe1 ♟xe1+ 17.♟xe1 ♟e8 18.♟d2 h6 19.♟e2 ♟e7 20.g3 ♟c8 21.♟g2 ♟e8 22.♟d3 ♟e5 23.♟e2 ♟ed7 24.♟d3 ♟e5 25.♟f1± g5?! 26.♟e1 ♟c8 27.♟d1±, with the idea of ♟e3-f5, exploiting the greatest positional defect of Black's position – the weakness of the f5-square, D.Dubov – G.Guseinov, Moscow 2012.) 13.♟f4 ♟e8 14. ♟ae1 ♟e5 15.♟e2 f5 16.♟c1 a6 17.♟d2± with a stable advantage for White.

7.h3!? 0-0

Here, after the exchange 7...

exd5, White must reply with 8.cxd5, and after 8...a6 9.a4 or 8...0-0 9.♟d3 we reach standard positions which we shall cover later; here it is less good to play 8.exd5 since after 8...0-0 White has no check, as he had in the variation with the exchange on move six).

8.♟d3

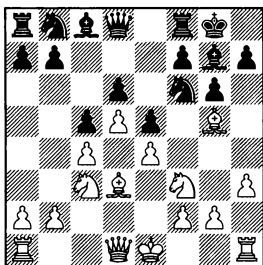


Now we shall deal in detail with the moves **A1) 8...♟e8** and **A2) 8...♟a6**.

The move 8...e5 does not appear to merit a thorough examination, because then there arises a well-known position of the King's Indian Defence (1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♟c3 d6 5.e4 g6 6.♟d3 ♟g7 7.h3 0-0 8.♟f3) in which it is White to move and not Black. The question is just what White should do to make the best possible use of his extra move. I believe that in view of the lines we analyse below (see variations **A1** and **A2**), his best choice would be 9.♟g5!? (Naturally, it is also good for White to play simply 9.0-0,

Chapter 1

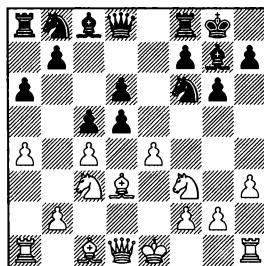
since in this pawn structure Black has no other active plan in sight except the possibility of advancing with f7-f5, but White's space advantage and lead in development, in addition to his clear-cut plan for queenside operations with a2-a3 and b2-b4, make Black's plan ineffective, for example: 9...♖e8 10.a3 f5 11.b4 b6 12.♙b1↑, or 9...♖h5 10.♙e1!?±, after which he cannot play 10...f5? in view of 11.exf5 gxf5 12.♖xe5+-).



There may follow later: 9...h6 (after 9...a6 10.♙d2 ♙e8 11.a3 ♖bd7 12.b4±, White maintains a slight but stable positional advantage thanks to his extra space and queenside initiative, Jovanic – Mrdya, Zagreb 2006) 10.♙e3 ♖h5 11.♙d2 ♖f4 (after 11...♙h7 12.0-0±, it would not work for Black to play 12...f5?! owing to 13.exf5 gxf5 14.♙d1! with the idea of countering the double attack 14...e4 with the move 15.♖g5±) 12.♙xf4 (it is also possible to play 12.♙f1!?± with the idea of continuing with g2-g3, which also leads to a slight but stable positional advantage for White) 12...exf4 13.♙xf4 ♙e7 14.0-0± Black has

failed to obtain sufficient compensation for the pawn, Lerner – Onoprienko, Yalta 1978.

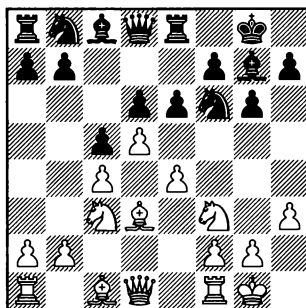
After 8...a6 White can play simply 9.a4 (The idea of the move 9.0-0!? is to respond to the exchange 9...exd5 with 10.exd5!?, intending a2-a4, to maintain a considerable space advantage. Black's pawn-sacrifice – 10...b5 11.cxb5, in the style of the Benko Gambit, is not quite correct in this situation, because after 11...♙b7 12.♙f4!↑ is very strong and Black fails to regain his pawn in the variation 12...♖xd5?! 13.♖xd5 ♙xd5 14.♙xg6 ♙xf3 15.♙xf3 fxg6 16.♙xa8 ♙xf4 17.bxa6+-, while after 11...♖bd7 12.a4!? axb5 13.♙xb5 ♙a6 14.♙f4± Black has no compensation for the pawn at all, Moskalenko – Indjic, Aosta 1989.) having in mind after the exchange in the centre 9...exd5 (if 9...♙e8 10.0-0 exd5 11.exd5!?± White maintains a long-lasting advantage)



to continue with 10.cxd5!? and the game transposes to one of the basic positions which we analyse in this book. In this variation, the

2...e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 d6 5.♙c3 g6 6.e4 ♗g7 7.h3 0-0 8.♙d3

other possible capture 10.exd5 presents Black with more possibilities of organizing active counterplay by 10...♗e8+ 11.♙e3 ♙h6 12.0-0 ♙xe3 13.fxe3 ♗e7, or 13...♙bd7 (it would be rather dubious for Black to try to capture a pawn with 13...♗xe3?!, in view of 14.♗d2 and if 14...♗e8?!, then 15.♗h6±, while if 14...♗e7 15.♙g5↑ White has a dangerous initiative for the sacrificed pawn.).



After 8...exd5 9.cxd5 there is a transposition to the main tabia, which we analyse in this book in the move-order 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♙c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♗g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♙f3. I should state immediately that if Black avoids this exchange in the centre (8...exd5 9.cxd5), then his prospects of creating active counterplay will be minimal. Later White will have the possibility of answering e6xd5 with e4xd5 and this will retain a great space advantage and superior prospects in the middle game. So, you should not be surprised that in the variations which we analyse below, under **A1** and **A2**, White's generally retains a considerable advantage.

A1) 8...♗e8 9.0-0 (diagram)

9...♙a6

This is the most popular move for Black, but it is very passive. His knight goes to c7 later, but it has no good prospects there,

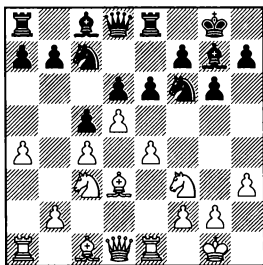
while White's space advantage is a permanent factor in this position. However, Black has no other active idea in sight. His problem is that he has missed the right moment for the exchange on d5, Now in answer to 9...exd5, White will play 10.exd5!? In this pawn structure Black has great difficulties in organizing any active counterplay. White has a slight but very stable positional advantage, since Black's light-squared bishop does not have any good developing squares.

10.♙g5!?

This is one of White's most energetic moves.

However, he has also a stable edge after 10.♗e1!? ♙c7 11.a4 (It also worth considering 11.dxe6!?, because after 11...fxe6?! 12.e5 dxe5 13.♙g5± Black has problems, while the line: 11...♗xe6 12.♙f4↑ presents White with initiative, while in the variation 11...♙xe6 12.♙c2 a6 13.♙e3 ♗b8 14.a4± he retains the advantage, because Black's d6-pawn is weak and he has no meaningful counterplay.

There might follow 14...b6 15.♟d2 ♔d7 16.♟xd6 ♔d4 and now it is bad for White to play 17.♔xd4?! cxd4 18.♙xd4 ♖e6 19.♟d5 ♙b7, but instead with 17.♙xd4! cxd4 18.♔d5 ♙b7 19.♖ad1 ♔e5 20.♟xd8 ♔xf3+ 21.gxf3 ♖exd8 he can reach a position in which Black's compensation for the pawn is insufficient, Andreikin – Chatalbashev, Struga 2012.)



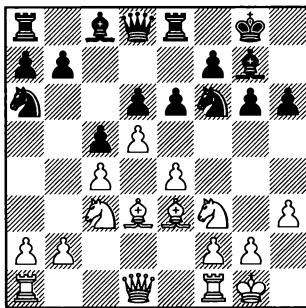
11... ♖a6 (after 11... b6?! 12. ♕g5 h6 13. ♕e3 e5 14. ♖d2 ♖h7 15. a5 bxa5 16. ♖xa5± White's positional advantage is obvious, Zaichik – Silva, Moscow 1994) 12. dxe6!? (White exchanges at a moment when Black's knight cannot access the d4-square.) 12... ♖xe6 (12... fxe6?! 13. e5 dxe5 14. ♕g5 ♖b4 15. ♖xe5±; 12... ♕xe6 13. ♕f4±) 13. ♕f4 ♖b4 14. ♖d2 (it is also good for White to play 14. ♕f1!?) 14... b6 15. ♖ad1±. Here, the variation 15... ♖xd3?! 16. ♖xd3± helped White to get rid of his passive bishop and even increased his advantage, Yermolinsky – Masculo, Chicago 1991.

10...h6

After 10...♘c7 11.♔d2 a6 (or 11...exd5 12.exd5!?) 12.a4 Black

ends up in a very passive position
without any counterplay.

11.♘e3



11...♞c7

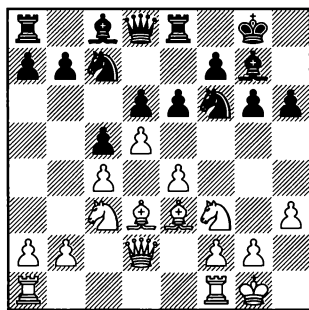
If Black decides to close the centre with the move 11...e5, then he reveals his intentions regarding his future operations on the kingside. Otherwise he will have great problems, owing to his lack of space in this closed position. Bearing in mind Black's plan, the move – (8...♖e8) does not seem at all good. In a position with a closed centre, this rook belongs on f8, as you will see in the following variation: 12.♖d2 ♖h7 13.a3. We can already say that White has a clear advantage, for example: 13...♗h5 14.♖ab1!? (14.♖fb1!?± is also good) 14...f5 (It would be even worse for Black to try to play actively on the other side of the board with 14...♖a5!? in view of 15.b4± and now after 15...♗xa3? 16.♗b5 ♖a4 17.♙c2 ♖a2 18.♖a1 Black loses either his queen, with 18...♖b2 19.♖fb1+–, or his rook after 18...♗xc4 19.♗xd6+–) 15.exf5!? gxf5 16.♗e2!? ♗f6 (16...e4?

2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 d6 5.♟c3 g6 6.e4 ♟g7 7.h3 0-0 8.♟d3

17.♟g5+–) 17.♟c2± and in view of the threat of 18.♟h4 White has a clear advantage.

We have already mentioned that the exchange 11...exd5 12.exd5!?± provides White with a slight edge in a position Black has no counterplay at all.

12.♟d2



12...exd5

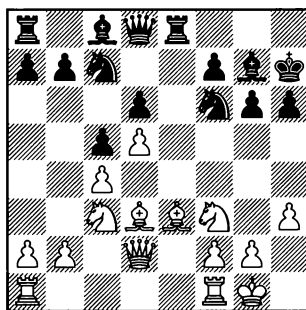
This move is forced in a way, because it is bad for Black to play 12...♟h7?! since after 13.e5! his position is difficult. For example, there might follow: 13...dxe5 (after 13...♟g8?! 14.exd6 it is hopeless for Black to play 14...♟a6 15.♟e4 ♟f6 16.♟xc5 ♟xc5 17.♟xc5+– Ricardi – Mascarinas, Buenos Aires 1994, or 14...♟xd6 15.♟e4 and now 15...♟d8 loses to 16.♟eg5+ hxg5 17.♟xg5+ ♟h8 18.♟xf7+–, while if 15...♟a6 it is also possible for White to continue with 16.♟fg5+! hxg5 17.♟xg5+ ♟h8 18.♟xf7+ ♟h7 19.♟g5+ ♟h8 20.♟xg6+–) 14.d6 ♟cd5 (14...e4 15.♟xe4 ♟a6 16.♟xc5±) 15.♟xe5 ♟xe3 16.fxe3 (an alternative here is 16.♟xe3 ♟g8 17.♟ad1±) 16...

♟f8?! (The other possible defence of the pawn with 16...♟g8 17.♟c2± enables Black to avoid immediate disaster, but in any case his position is not to be envied.) 17.♟xf7! ♟xf7 18.♟xg6+! ♟g8 (18...♟xg6 19.♟d3+ ♟h5 20.♟e2 e5 21.♟f5+ ♟h4 22.♟b1! ♟a5 23.g3+ ♟xh3 24.♟f1+–) 19.♟xf7+ ♟xf7 20.♟e4 ♟g8 21.♟xf6+ ♟xf6 22.♟d3 (22.♟f3 ♟d7 23.♟af1 ♟g7 24.♟f7+–) 22...♟g7 23.♟g6 ♟g5 24.♟f7+ ♟h7 25.d7+–

13.exd5!?

Black will suffer for a long time in this pawn structure.

13...♟h7



We can make some general evaluations now. In the diagram position White has a considerable positional advantage thanks to his extra space and the unfortunate position of Black's knight on c7.

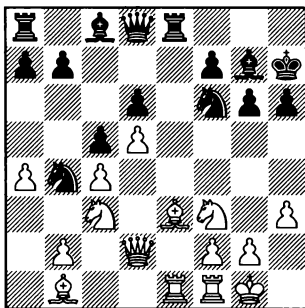
14.a4

White can also consider 14.♟fe1!? after which Black, in order to create active counterplay, is practically forced to play 14...b5, but then after 15.cxb5 ♟cxd5 16.

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♖xd5 ♖xd5 17.♙e4!? ♜xe4 18.
 ♜xd5 ♙f5 19.g4 ♜xe3 20.♜xe3 ♙e6
 21.♜xe6 fxe6 22.♜xe6 White's
 prospects are considerably better,
 for example: 22...♜f6 (22...d5 23.
 ♜e1 d4 24.b3±; 22...♙b2 23. ♜d1
 ♜g8 24.♜xd6 ♜xe6 25.♜xe6 c4
 26.♜c6 c3 27.a4±; 22...♜f8 23.
 ♙g2±) 23.♜xf6 ♙xf6 24.♜d1 ♜d8
 25.b3±and Black's compensation
 for the pawn is insufficient.

14...♖a6 15.♜ae1 ♖b4 16.
 ♙b1±

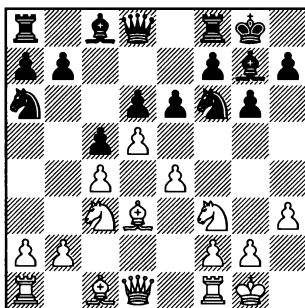


16...♙f5?! (here it was prefera-
 ble for Black to play 16...♙d7, but
 even then after 17.♙f4 ♜xe1 18.
 ♜xe1 ♜f8 19.♙h2± White main-
 tains his edge) 17.♙xf5 gxf5 18.
 ♖h4 ♜d7 19.♜d1!± with a great
 advantage for White, Akesson –
 Lorscheid, Pardubice 2012 and if
 19...♖e4 20.♙f4± is good for
 White.

A2) 8...♖a6 9.0–0

(diagram)

Here it is worth analysing in
 detail the moves: **A2a) 9...e5**
 and **A2b) 9...♖c7**.



The positions arising after 9...
 ♜e8 10.♙g5!?, or 10.♜e1!? are
 dealt with, by transposition, in
 variation **A1**.

A2a) 9...e5

This plan, switching to a King's
 Indian pawn structure, seems too
 slow and passive, since in fact
 Black is planning to enter one of
 the variations of the King's Indian
 Defence (i.e. 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5
 e5 4.♖c3 d6 5.e4 g6 6.♙d3 ♙g7 7.
 ♖f3 0–0 8.h3 ♖a6 9.0–0) but
 with an extra tempo for White in
 this case, because in the K.I.D.
 Black's pawn comes to e5 in one
 move (e7-e5), while in our case it
 takes two moves, first e7-e6 and
 then e6-e5. It is not surprising
 therefore that after 9...e5 Black's
 position is very passive and infe-
 rior for a long time to come.

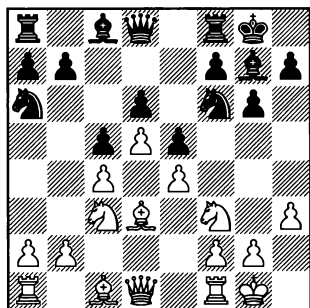
(diagram)

10.a3!?

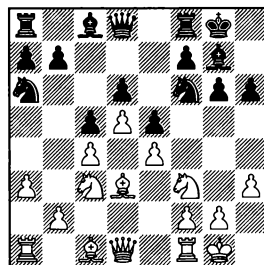
White plans to launch an of-
 fensive on the queenside. Black
 must seek counter chances on the
 other side of the board.

Here it is also worth mention-

2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 d6 5.♞c3 g6 6.e4 ♔g7 7.h3 0-0 8.♙d3



ous move, has definite drawbacks.



ing the move 10.♙g5!?, which is a typical idea to impede the progress of Black's kingside counterplay. After 10...h6 11.♙e3 ♞h7 12.♞d2 f5 13.exf5!? gxf5 14.♙xh6 e4 15.♙xg7 ♞xg7 16.♞xe4 fxe4 17.♙xe4, there arises a position in which White has three pawns for a piece, while the situation of Black's king, deprived of pawn cover, seems to be rather insecure. Even after his relatively best option 17...♞f6 (in the game Indjic – Ivekovic, Athens 2012, Black decided to follow another path with 17...♙f5 but this enabled White to redeploy his heavy pieces to the kingside with 18.♞ae1 ♞c8?! 19.♙xf5 ♞xf5 20.♞e4 ♞c7 21.♞g4+ ♞h8 22.♞h4 ♞g5 23.♞c3+ ♞g8 24.♞f5 ♞f8 25.♞f3 ♞xg4 26.♞xg4+ ♞h8 27.♞e7 ♞xe7 28.♞xc8+–) with 18.♞ae1↑ White maintains the initiative.

10...♞h5

Here Black has also tried the move 10...h6, preparing the retreat of his knight back to the h7-square, but this plan, as we have seen in our notes to White's previ-

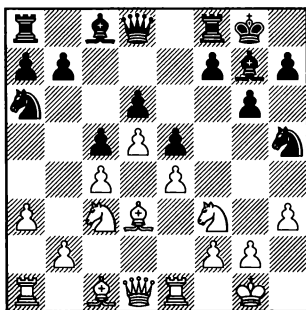
11.♞b1 ♞h7 12.♞h2 f5. Now with the move 13.f4!?, White can start a counter-operation on the kingside. After 13...exf4 14.♙xf4 g5 15.♙d2 f4 16.♞f3 g4! 17.hxg4 ♙xg4 18.♞e1 ♙e5 (It is no improvement for Black to play 18...♙xf3 19.♞xf3 ♙e5 20.♞e2 ♞g5 in view of 21.♞xf4!∞ and White has the initiative and more than sufficient compensation for the exchange, Herráiz Hidalgo – Ortega Hermida, Sant Lluís 2005.) 19.♞xe5 dxe5 20.b4 (here 20.♞e2!? is worth considering, so that after 20...♞g5, White can breach Black's defences on the kingside by means of the piece-sacrifice 21.♞xf4! exf4 22.♞f2∞) 20...b6 (it is more resilient for Black to play here 20...♞g5 21.♞e2 ♞c7) 21.♞e2 ♞g5. Now the piece-sacrifice 22.♞xf4! exf4 23.♙xf4 ♞e8 24.b5! ♞b8 25.♙xg5 (here 25.♞g3!+– is even stronger) 25...hxg5?! (Black could have prolonged his resistance here with 25...♞xf1+ 26.♞xf1 hxg5 27.♞f6±) 26.♞g3 ♞xf1+ 27.♞xf1 ♞h5 28.e5 ♞d7 29.e6+– White's attack is already decisive, Khalifman – Damljanovic, Bled/

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Rogashka Slatina 1991.

An option for White that deserves great attention here is 11. ♖e3!?, against which in tournament practice so far Black has played only 11... ♖h7 12. ♗d2 f5, with the idea of 13. ♙xh6 f4 14. ♙xg7 ♖xg7, trying to organize an attack on the kingside at the cost of a pawn. In the game Bocharov – Evdokimov, Vladimir 2002, the continuation was 15. ♜fb1 ♜h8!? 16. ♖f1 g5 17. ♖e1 g4 18. hxg4 ♙xg4 and although Black had some initiative his compensation for the pawn still seemed insufficient. Instead of capturing the pawn on h6, White should sacrifice a piece for three pawns and the initiative with the variation 13. exf5!? gxf5 14. ♙xh6 e4 15. ♙xg7 ♖xg7 16. ♖xe4 fxe4 17. ♙xe4±. White's advantage in this position is clear and his situation is fine even from the material point of view – three pawns for the piece. In addition, Black's knight on d6 is practically out of play and without adequate pawn cover his king is seriously endangered.

11. ♜e1

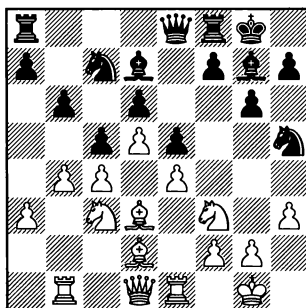


11... ♖c7

The position of his knight on h5 does not allow Black to play 11... f5? in view of 12. exf5 gxf5 13. ♖xe5+–

After 11... ♖f4 it is possible for White to play 12. ♙xf4!? (it is also good to opt for 12. ♙f1±, with the idea of answering 12... f5?! with 13. ♙xf4 exf4 14. e5±) 12... exf4 13. e5↑

12. b4 b6 13. ♙d2 ♙d7 14. ♜b1 ♜e8



15. ♙c2!?

White begins to prepare the exchange of the light-squared bishops, in order to emphasize the weakness of the light squares on Black's queenside.

15... ♖f4 16. ♙a4

Here it also looks interesting for White to play 16. bxc5!? bxc5 17. ♙xf4 exf4 18. e5 dxe5 19. d6 ♖a6 20. ♖d5±

16... cxb4 17. axb4↑

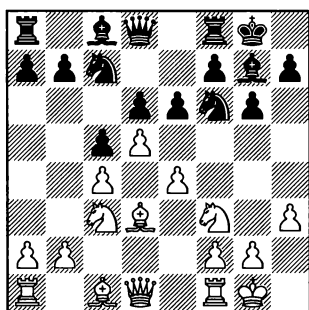
This position was reached in the game Beliavsky – Smirin, USSR 1988. Black decided to begin active operation on the kingside with 17... f5?!, but after 18.

2...e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 d6 5.♘c3 g6 6.e4 ♔g7 7.h3 0-0 8.♙d3

exf5 ♜xf5 19.♙xd7 ♜xd7 20.♘e4± this just led to a position in which White had a great positional advantage owing to his total control of the light squares.

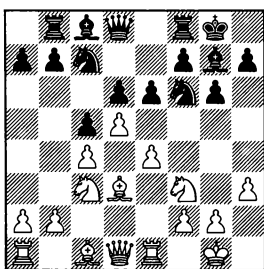
A2b) 9...♘c7

This is the most popular move for Black in the scheme in which he postpones the exchange on d5.



10.♙g5!?

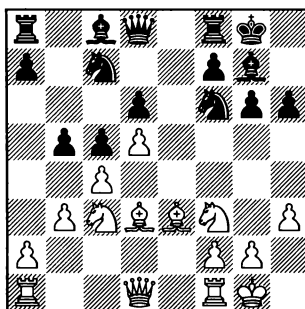
White maintains both the initiative and his positional pressure after 10.♙e1!? ♜b8 (the variations arising after 10...♜e8 are analysed in variation A1)



by means of 11.a4!? (or 11.♙g5!? h6 12.♙e3 and here, after

12...b5, he can continue with 13.e5! ♘fe8 14.♙d2↑, while after 12...exd5, White can choose between the quiet line: 13.exd5 b5 14.b3± and the sharper 13.cxd5!? b5 14.♙d2 ♘h7 15.a3!? c4 16.♙f1 a6 17.♜ad1 ♙b7 18.♙f4 ♜c8 19.♙h2 ♙d7 20.♘d4↑ when White's considerable positional advantage is beyond doubt, Sakaev – Art. Minasian, Dubai 2003.) 11...e5 12. ♙f1 h6 13.♙d2 ♘h7 14.♙c1 h5 15.♘b5 a6 16.♘xc7 ♙xc7 17.b4 cxb4 (after 17...b6?! 18.a5± Black's defensive fortress on the queenside is destroyed) 18.a5!? f5 19.♙xb4 fxe4 (after 19...f4? 20.♙a3 ♜d8 21.c5 Black's position is strategically hopeless. White has an overwhelming advantage on the queenside, while Black has failed to organize any real counterplay on the kingside, E. Vladimirov – San Segundo Carrillo, Salamanca 1991) 20.♘d2 ♘f6 21.♙a3 ♜d8 22.c5 dxc5 23.♙xc5↑ and if 23...♘xd5?! then 24.♘xe4±

10...h6 11.♙e3 exd5 12. exd5 b5 13.b3!?



This position is quite fashion-

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able in the variation with the move 10.♔g5!? White's prospects here are clearly preferable, thanks to his space advantage and the misplacement of Black's knight on the c7-square.

13...♟e8 14.♞d2 ♘h7

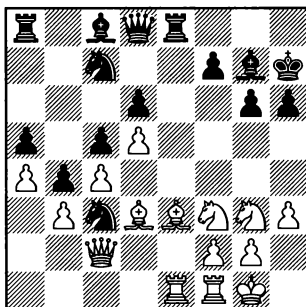
It is no improvement to play 14...b4 15.♞e2 ♞e4 16.♟xe4 ♟xe4 owing to 17.♞g3↑ and here, after 17...♟e8, it looks very good for White to sacrifice the exchange with 18.♟xh6! ♟xa1 19.♟xa1. He has a powerful initiative and more than sufficient compensation, thanks to the weakness of the dark squares on Black's kingside.

15.♟ae1 b4 16.♞e2 ♞e4 17.♞c2 ♞c3

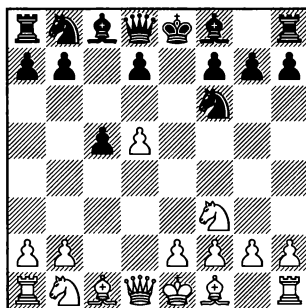
In the game Yakovich – Marin, Gothenburg 2001, Black played 17...f5?!, but with 18.g4! ♞f6 19.♞g3± White's strategy triumphed completely. All his pieces are in action both in the centre and on the kingside; Black's rook on a8 and knight on c7 are isolated; his position is hopeless. The game concluded: 19...fxg4 20.♞h2! ♞g5?! 21.hxg4 ♞f7 22.f4 ♟xe3 23.♟xe3 ♟d4 24.fxg5 ♟xe3+ 25.♘g2 ♟f4 26.♞e4 and Black resigned.

18.♞g3 a5 19.a4!↑
(diagram)

White has closed the queenside and now focuses his attention on the other side of the board, where all his pieces are much more active. It is important that here 19...bxa3?! fails to 20.♞h5!? ♟h8 21.♟d2±



B) 4...exd5 5.cxd5



From the diagram position we shall analyse the moves: **B1) 5...b5** and **B2) 5...d6**.

The seldom played variation 5...♟d6 6.♞c3 will be dealt with in variation **B**, Chapter 3.

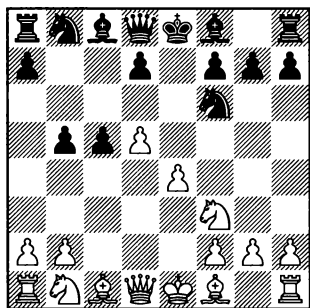
Here 5...g6 6.♞c3 does not lead to original positions, because if Black plays 6...d6, then the move 7.h3! leads to positions analysed in variation **A2**, Chapter 2, while if 6...♟g7, then 7.e4 0–0 (or 7...d6 8.h3) 8.♟d3 d6 (or 8...♟e8 9.0–0 d6 10.h3) 9.h3 and we have reached the main lines of the Modern Benoni.

2...e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 b5 6.e4

B1) 5...b5

In my opinion this move is a bit over-ambitious.

6.e4!



If White wants to try to refute his opponent's idea, he must play this energetic move.

6...♗xe4

There is scarcely anything better at this point.

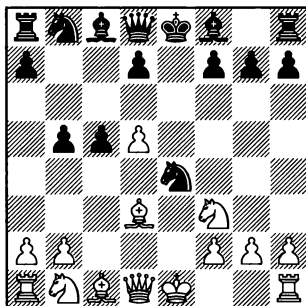
In reply to 6...c4, it is possible for White to play 7.♘c3!? (threatening both 8.e5 and 8.♗b5) 7...♗b4 (this is relatively best for Black, because after 7...♗a5, White has the powerful response 8.♗d4±, while after 7...♗c5 he has the strong continuation 8.e5 ♘g4 9.♗e4±) 8.♗e2!? 0-0 (8...♗xe4 9.♗d4 ♗f6 10.0-0 ♗xc3 11.bxc3±) 9.0-0 ♗xc3 10.bxc3 ♗xe4 11.♗d4↑ followed by a2-a4. White has a positional advantage and the initiative.

7.♗d3

This is White's main move in this position.

It might also be interesting to test a line which has not yet been tried in tournament practice: 7.

♗xb5!? ♗a5+ 8.♗fd2, with the better prospects for White, for example: 8...♗d6 (8...♗xd2? 9.♗e2+ ♗e4+ 10.♗d2+-; 8...♗xb5 9.♗xe4↑) 9.♗e2+ ♗e7 10.♗c3 0-0 11.0-0↑



7...♗d6!?

It is rather dubious for Black to continue here with 7...♗a5+?!. In the game Cebalo – Podlesnik, Pula 1999, the game continued 8.♗bd2 ♗d6 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♗e1 ♗d8 11.a4 (11.♗g5!?±) 11...♗a6 12.♗e4± and White obtained a great, possibly decisive, advantage. Now if 12...0-0, White reaches a winning position by force after 13.♗xd6 ♗xd6 14.♗xh7+! ♗xh7 15.♗g5+ ♗g6 16.h4 f5 17.h5+ ♗f6 18.♗d2! b4 19.b3+-

8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♗e1

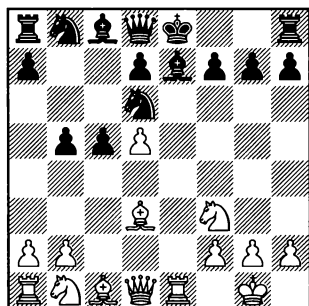
(diagram)

In this position White has the initiative and more than enough compensation for the pawn.

9...0-0

This is the best move.

In the game Roca – Podlesnik, Yerevan 1996, Black continued with 9...♗b7?! 10.♗g5 (it is also



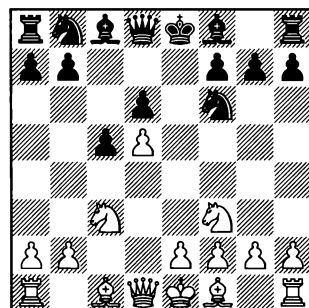
good for White to play 10.♖e2!?±) 10...f6 11.g4 ♜f8 12.♘c3 (even better here is 12.♙h4!+–) 12...b4?! 13.♙e4 ♘xe4 14.♙xe4 d6 15.♙h4!+– with a decisive advantage for White.

10.g4 c4

It is bad for Black to play 10...a6? in view of 11.♖e2+–, while after 10...♙b7, White can play 11.♖c2↑

11.♙f1 ♙b7 12.a4 White has the initiative and more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

B2) 5...d6 6.♘c3



This is the basic position of

this variation after the moves 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6.

Black's most popular and most critical moves are 6...g6 and 6...a6 (see the next chapter), but before we begin their analysis, we should take a look at a few other moves which are less popular and less reliable, but still tried sometimes in tournament practice: **B2a) 6...♙f5, B2b) 6...♙g4, B2c) 6...♙e7, B2d) 6...♖e7, B2e) 6...♘bd7 and B2f) 6...♙a6.**

Black does not have enough time to play the active move 6...♖a5?!, since after 7.e4! (intending e4–e5), his lag in development becomes a telling factor: 7...♘bd7 (7...♙g4?! 8.♖b3± planning e4–e5; 7...♘xe4?! 8.♖e2 f5 9.♙d2±; 7...a6?! 8.e5!↑) 8.♙d2± (planning h3, ♙d3, 0–0). After Black's awkward 6th move he has no good prospects and his position becomes even more passive.

B2a) 6...♙f5

This is a very rarely played move and it appears to be second-rate, even dubious, because it does not prevent White's thematic move in this position: e2–e4.

7.e4!

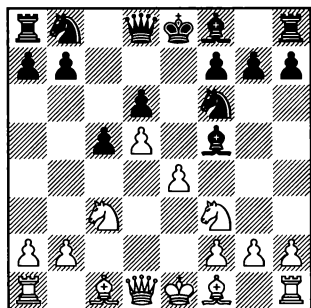
(diagram)

Now Black has great problems.

7...♙g4

Black loses a piece after 7...♘xe4? 8.♘xe4 ♖e7 (8...♙xe4 9.♖a4+–) 9.♙d3 ♙xe4 10.♖a4+–, as well as after 7...♙xe4? 8.♘xe4 ♖e7

2...e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♙c3



(8...♙xe4 9.♖a4+-) 9.♙d3 ♘xe4
10.♖a4+-

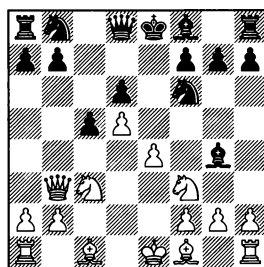
After 7...♙g6 8.♙b5+ (here White can also choose the quieter positional move 8.♙h4!?, having in mind the variation 8...♙e7 9.♙xg6 hxg6 10.♙e2 0-0 11.0-0±, in which he gains the bishop-pair and a space advantage, or 8...♙h5 9.♙e2 ♙xe2 10.♖xe2↑ and Black's lag in development is considerable.) 8...♙bd7 (after 8...♙fd7 9.0-0 a6 10.♙d3, whether Black plays 10...♙e7 11.♙e2↑ or 10...b5 11.a4 b4 12.♙e2↑ White's lead in development is overwhelming) 9.♙g5!? Black has great problems with his development in this position. For example, it is bad for him to play the seemingly natural move 9...♙e7, in view of 10.e5! ♙e4 (10...dxe5? 11.d6+-; 10...♙h5 11.e6±) 11.e6 ♙xg5 12.♙xd7+ ♙f8 13.♙d2±

8.h3

This is a quiet positional move which practically forces Black to exchange his light-squared bishop for the knight on f3, which is very good for White in this position from the strategic point of

view, especially since Black's bishop came to the g4-square in two moves – 6...♙f5 7.e4 ♙g4 (in general, his bishop comes to g4 in one move in this pawn structure, for example in this variation, which we shall analyse later: 1.d4 ♙f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♙c3 a6 7.a4 g6 8.e4 ♙g4), so in fact, Black loses an important tempo in the opening.

White has an alternative to the quiet move 8.h3 in the aggressive sortie 8.♖b3!?



Then if 8...♙xf3 (it is weaker for Black to play 8...♖c8?! owing to 9.e5!± and now he loses after 9...♙xf3? 10.exf6 ♙g4 11.♙e4+-, while if 9...dxe5 10.♙xe5±, or 9...♙fd7 10.exd6 ♙xd6 11.♙b5 ♙c7 12.♖e3+ ♙f8 13.♙d2± and White's advantage is beyond doubt) 9.gxf3!? (after the sharper line 9.♖xb7 ♙xg2 10.♙xg2 ♙bd7 11.♙b5 ♖b8 White should continue here with 12.♖a6!? ♖b6 13.♖a4± retaining an edge, because in the complications following 12.♙c7+ ♙e7 13.♖xa7 ♖c8 14. ♖a5 ♖d8 15.0-0 ♖b7 16.e5 ♙xe5 17.f4 and 17...♙eg4!? 18.♖e1+ ♙d7 19.♖a4+

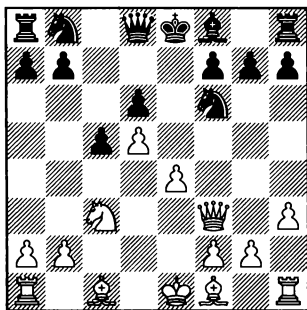
Chapter 1

♖xc7 20.♚a5= he has nothing better than a perpetual check) 9... ♚c8 10.♔g5 (10.♔g2 ♜bd7 11.0-0 ♔e7 12.f4±). Here, after 10...♔e7 11.♙g1!↑, or 10...♜bd7 11.♙h3↑, there arises a very complicated position in which White has the initiative and the better prospects. His plan is quite obvious; he intends to castle queenside and play f3-f4, with the plan of carrying out the pawn-break e4-e5.

8...♔xf3

It is not advisable for Black to play 8...♙h5?!, since after 9.g4 ♔g6 10.g5 ♜fd7 (10...♜h5? 11.♔e2+-) 11.♜h4 ♔e7 12.f4± White maintains an obvious positional advantage, while Black's position is very precarious and he has no counterplay. It is bad for him to continue with 12...0-0?! in view of 13.♜xg6 hxg6 (13...fxg6 14.h4+-) 14.h4+- and in both cases White's attack is so powerful that it is unlikely that Black can parry it.

9.♚xf3



9...♜bd7

But not 9...g6?!, because after 10.e5! (it is also good for White to play here 10.♔g5!? and now 10... ♔e7 loses to 11.e5! ♜fd7 12.e6 0-0 13.♙h6+-, while after 10...♔g7 11.♙b5+ Black loses his castling rights after 11...♜f8 12.e5 dxe5 13.d6± or 11...♜bd7?! 12.e5! dxe5 13.♔xd7+ ♜xd7 14.d6+- which is even worse for Black) 10...dxe5 11.♔g5 ♔g7 (Black loses after 11... ♜bd7? 12.♙b5+-, or 11...♔e7? 12.d6 ♚xd6 13.♚xb7+-) 12.♙b5+ ♜f8 13.d6 ♜c6 14.♔xc6 bxc6 15.d7!? White's advantage is overwhelming, for example: 15...h6 16.♚xc6 hxg5 17.0-0-0 ♚b8 18.♚d6+ ♜g8 19.♚xb8 ♚xb8 20.d8♚+ ♜h7 21.♚xb8 ♚xb8 22.♙he1 g4 23.♙xe5 gxh3 24.gxh3+-

10.♔e2 g6

After 10...♔e7 11.0-0 0-0± Black's position is passive, because he has failed to develop his dark-squared bishop to g7 where it would be much more active than on the e7-square.

11.0-0 ♔g7 12.♔f4!? ♜e5

Black must play this, since it would be bad for him to choose 12...♚e7?! in view of 13.♜b5±

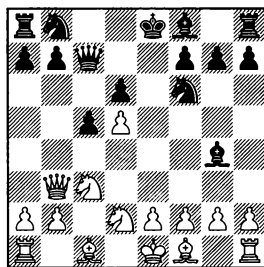
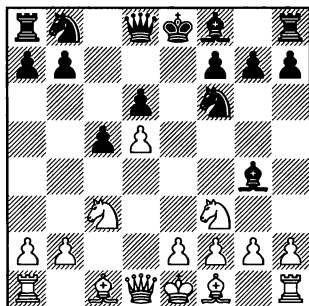
13.♚e3!↑ White maintains the initiative, owing to his powerful bishop-pair and superior piece-coordination.

B2b) 6...♔g4

This move is played only rarely and is not quite in the spirit of the position. The bishop-sortie to the

2...e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♙c3

g4-square at a moment when Black's kingside is not developed is premature and presents White with several very good possibilities to fight for a stable positional advantage.



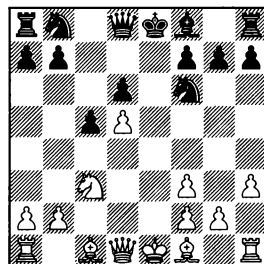
For example, after 8...a6 9.a4 ♗e7 10.e4 0-0 11.h3, in order to avoid the worst Black must retreat his bishop to its initial square 11...♗c8 (11...♗h5?! 12.f4+—), reaching after 12.♗e2 ♖bd7 13.0-0± a very passive position in which White maintains a stable positional advantage.

7.♘d2

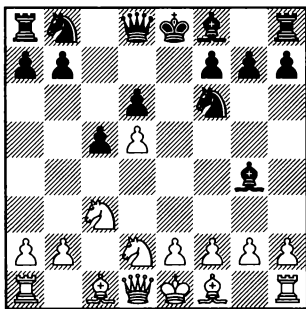
This logical move is White's most popular in this position.

It is also very good to play 7.♙b3!?, after which he has a stable advantage. 7...♙c7 (7...♗xf3?! 8.exf3!±; following 7...b6 8.h3!?, and if Black's bishop retreats 8...♗h5, then White can continue with 9.g4 ♗g6 10.♘h4↑, while after the exchange 8...♗xf3 9.exf3 Black is unable to develop his other bishop on the long diagonal: 9...g6? 10.♗b5+ ♖bd7 11.0-0 ♗g7 12.♙e1+ ♗f8 13.♗c6 ♙b8 14.♗f4+—, or if he plays passively with 9...a6 10.♙a4+!? ♖fd7 11.♗d3 ♗e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♙e1± then White has the initiative and a positional advantage) 8.♘d2 with the better prospects for White, in view of the misplacement of Black's bishop on g4.

It might also be interesting for White to try the immediate 7.h3!?, which has not yet been tested in tournament practice. After 7...♗xf3 (if 7...♗h5, White's simplest response would be 8.♙b3!? ♙c7 9.♘d2±, maintaining the positional pressure, although it would also be very good to play 8.g4 ♗g6 9.♘h4± with the better prospects, since Black has no active counterplay in a similar pawn structure) 8.exf3



White again has a stable advantage, because with Black's light-squared bishop absent from the board, his position is very passive and lacking in prospects; 8...a6 (after 8...g6? 9.♗b5+ ♖bd7 10.0-0, Black has great problems after 10...a6?! 11.♞e1+ ♗e7 12.♙xd7+ ♜xd7 13.♙g5 ♖g8!? 14.b4!+-, or 10...♙g7 11.♞e1+ ♜f8 12.♙f4+) and now White's simplest response would be 9.a4 ♖bd7 (it seems very risky for Black to try 9...g6 here, because his king is very unsafe: 10.a5!? ♙g7 11.♞e2+! ♞e7 12.♙f4 ♞xe2+ 13.♙xe2 ♜d7 14.♞c1↑ ♜c7?! 15.b4!±) 10.♙d3 ♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♞e1 ♞e8 13.a5± and White has a small but very stable positional advantage.



7...♗e7

It is not logical for Black and does not deserve serious attention for him to play 7...g6?!, because after 8.h3 his bishop must retreat to its initial square – 8...♗c8. Then, after 9.e4, or 9.g3 ♙g7 10.♙g2 0-0 11.0-0, White will play the familiar Benoni pawn struc-

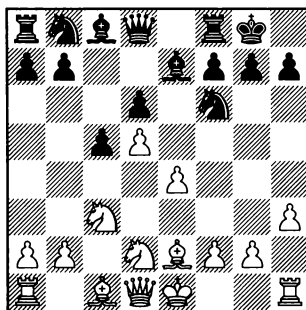
ture under much more favourable circumstances than usual. Black's manoeuvre ♗c8-g4, followed by ♙g4-c8, looks like a senseless loss of time.

The position is more or less the same after 7...a6 8.a4 ♗e7 (following 8...♖bd7 and 9.f3 ♗h5 10.e4±, or 9.h3 ♗h5 10.g4 ♙g6 11.♙g2± White maintains a stable advantage thanks to Black's misplaced light-squared bishop) 9.h3 ♗h5 (9...♗c8 10.e4 0-0 11.♗e2 ♖bd7 12.0-0± and White has a clear advantage; because of the way Black's pieces are deployed, White's extra space is a very important factor) 10.g4 ♙g6 11.♙g2 0-0 (11...♖bd7 12.0-0±) 12.0-0± Black's position is very passive and prospectless.

8.h3 ♗c8

The retreat to the kingside after 8...♗h5 9.g4 ♙g6 10.♙g2 0-0 (10...♖bd7 11.0-0±) 11.0-0±, leads to a passive position for Black in which his chances are not at all promising owing to the misplaced light-squared bishop on g6.

9.e4 0-0 10.♗e2±

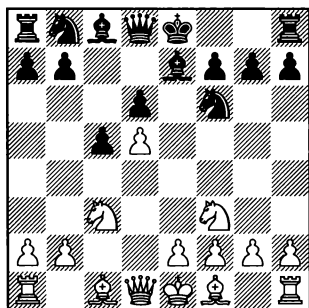


2...e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♖c3

White's space advantage guarantees him a stable advantage, especially since Black lacks a good plan in this position.

B2c) 6...♗e7

This is played much more often than the moves we have analysed so far – 6...♗f5 and 6...♗g4. It also seems a bit better than these, but no doubt it is not so modern and reliable as his most popular responses 6...a6 and 6...g6. The bishop on e7 is not as active as in its usual place in similar Benoni pawn structures – the g7-square. This factor, as well as White's space advantage, provides White with a stable advantage in the ensuing middle game.

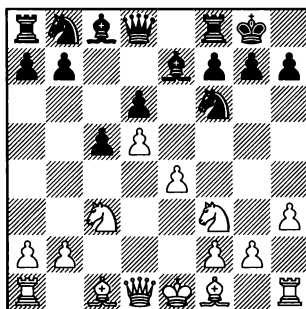


7.h3!?

This is one of the most promising alternatives for White. The idea is not to allow the move ♗c8-g4 in the future. In general, when White has a space advantage, it is advantageous for him to preserve as many pieces as possible and avoid exchanges.

However, it is also possible for him to play 7.e4 ♗g4. After 8.h3, the retreat 8...♗h5 (Black should acquiesce to the exchange of his bishop and enter the resulting slightly inferior position: 8...♗xf3!? 9.♞xf3 ♖bd7 10.♗f4!? 0-0 11.♗e2±) is too risky for Black in view of 9.g4 ♗g6 10.e5! ♖fd7 (after 10...dxe5 11.♗b5+ Black loses his castling rights: 11...♗f8 12.♖xe5↑, because after 11...♖bd7? 12.d6 ♗f8 13.♖xe5+- his position is a disaster) 11.h4!? (it is also possible for White to continue with the less principled line 11.exd6 ♗xd6 12.♞e2+ and Black will again be forced to lose his castling rights with 12...♗f8 13.♖b5 ♖b6 14.♗g2±, because 12...♞e7?! 13.♖b5± is very bad for him) 11...h5 (if 11...h6?! 12.e6! fxe6 13.dxe6 ♖b6 14.♗d3 ♗xd3 15.♞xd3 0-0 16.♖g5+- Black's king is in terrible danger) 12.e6 hgx4 (12...fxe6 13.dxe6 hgx4 14.♗d3!±) 13.exd7+ ♖xd7 14.♖g5↑ White maintains a very dangerous initiative.

7...0-0 8.e4



Black's position is passive and

clearly worse. He has no good plan of action and is forced to stick to purely passive defence.

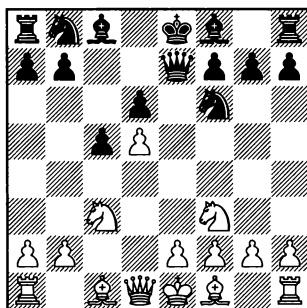
8...♟a6

After 8...a6 9.a4 ♞e8 10.♙d3 ♜bd7 11.0-0 ♙f8 12.♙f4±, or 8... ♞e8 9.♙d3 ♙f8 10.0-0± White has a stable, although not large, positional advantage. From the point of view of the pawn structure, these positions resemble the variation 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. ♟c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♟f3 a6 10.a4, but under slightly worse circumstances for Black, because his dark-squared bishop occupies a passive position.

9.♙d3 ♟c7 10.a4± White has a slight but stable positional advantage. The game Manninen – B.Gustafsson, Helsinki 2001, continued: 10...a6 11.0-0 ♞b8 (it is worse for Black to play 11...♙d7?! 12.♙c2!?↑, because after 12...b5?! White has the powerful riposte 13.e5±) 12.♙f4± with the better game for White. Now after Black's thematic pawn advance 12...b5, White maintains his positional edge with the move 13.♞e1!?

B2d) 6...♞e7

This is a very rarely played move and it does not seem at all convincing. Black determines the placement of his queen a bit too early and, what is more important, he does not prevent White's thematic pawn-advance e4.



7.e4!?

This is the principled move. White also has a stable advantage after the rarely played variation 7.♞a4+!? ♙d7 (or 7...♟bd7?! 8. ♙f4↑ threatening 9.♟b5) 8.♞b3±

7...a6

The centre pawn is “poisoned”: if 7...♟xe4?? 8.♞a4+.

After 7...g6 White's simplest reaction would be 8.♙d3 ♙g7 (the bishop-sortie 8...♙g4?! is bad for Black, because of 9.♞a4+, for example: 9...♟bd7 10.♟d2±, or 9... ♙d7 10.♞b3±) 9.h3 0-0 10.0-0 a6 11.a4 ♟bd7, transposing to well-known positions with an early move of Black's queen to the e7-square – see variation A in Chapter 8.

8.♙d3!?

This is a logical continuation. White is not afraid of the move b7-b5, because Black lags considerably in development owing to the early move of his queen.

8...b5

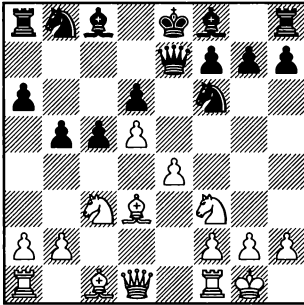
After 8...♙g4 White can play 9.♞a4+ ♟bd7 10.♟d2 and Black has numerous problems to worry about owing to the unstable place-

2...e6 3. ♖f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. ♖c3

ment of his light-squared bishop on g4.

If 8...g6 White's simplest reaction would be 9.0-0 ♖g7 (9...♗g4?! 10.♖a4+!? ♖bd7 11.♖d2±, or 11. ♖e1!?±) 10.e5 dxe5 11.♖xe5 0-0 12.♞e1↑ with a strong initiative.

9.0-0



White has an obvious positional advantage and the better development. Black is only seemingly active on the queenside. His pawn structure a6-b5 is rather unstable, because White has the possibility of undermining it with the move a2-a4.

9...♗g4

Black has no time for 9...g6? in view of 10.e5! with the idea of 10... dxe5 11.♖xe5 ♗g7 12.♖xg6+—

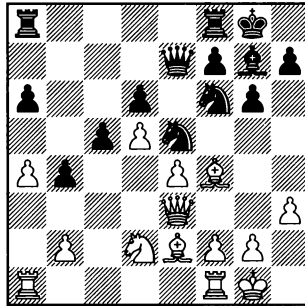
10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♖xf3 ♖bd7 12.♗f4!? ♖e5 13.♖e3 g6

After 13...♖xd3 14.♖xd3↑ it is again bad for Black to play 14... g6?, because of 15.e5!+—

14.♗e2 ♗g7 15.a4!? b4 16. ♖b1 0-0 17.♖d2

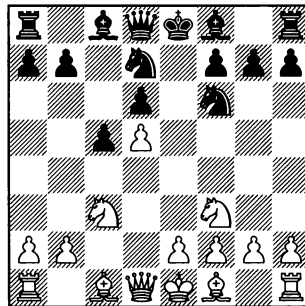
(diagram)

White has a clear positional advantage; he has the bishop-



pair, while Black has no real counterplay on the queenside, because his pawn structure there has been deprived of its mobility and White securely controls the c4-outpost.

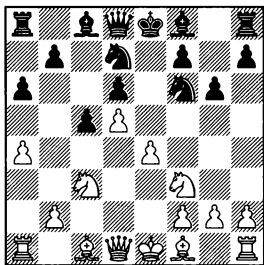
B2e) 6...♖bd7



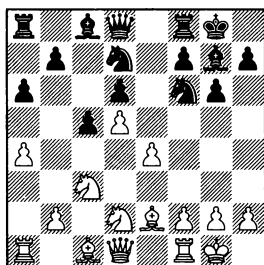
This development of the knight seems premature, because Black deliberately loses the possibility of the manoeuvre ♗c8-g4 and this enables his opponent to avoid losing a tempo for the move h2-h3 in many variations.

7.e4 g6

The position is more or less the same after 7...a6 8.a4!? g6.

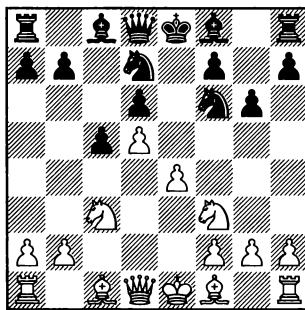


White can exploit the fact that Black has played an early $\text{d}7$ by continuing without the move $\text{h}2\text{-h}3$. After $9.\text{e}2$ (or $9.\text{h}3$ $\text{g}7$ $10.\text{d}3$ $0\text{-}0$ $11.0\text{-}0$ – see Chapter 8) $9...\text{g}7$ $10.0\text{-}0$ $0\text{-}0$ $11.\text{d}2!$?, White can enter another very fashionable line in which contemporary tournament practice shows that his prospects are clearly better, owing to his extra space.



For example, after $11...\text{e}8!$?, which is the most popular move for Black in this position, White's simplest reaction would be $12.\text{c}2!$?, preserving the better prospects. After $12...\text{b}8$ (if $12...\text{b}6$ $13.\text{f}4$ $\text{c}7$ $14.\text{d}4$ $\text{b}7$ $15.\text{e}f3\pm$, Black has problems organizing active counterplay, Inkiov – K. Angelov, Borovec 2002; or $12...\text{c}7$ $13.\text{e}1!$ $\text{d}5$ $14.\text{h}3$ $g5$ $15.\text{f}1$

and Black has difficulties finding a reasonable plan of action in the variation $15...\text{h}6$ $16.\text{a}5!?\pm$ or $15...g4$ $16.\text{h}xg4$ $\text{d}fxg4$ $17.\text{d}d1!$? $\text{h}4$ $18.\text{a}3!\pm$) $13.\text{a}5$ $\text{c}7$ (or $13...\text{d}e5$ $14.\text{a}3!$? $g5$ $15.\text{e}e1$ $b5$ $16.\text{a}xb6$ $\text{e}xb6$ $17.\text{d}d1!$? $\text{b}4$ $18.\text{e}xa6$ $\text{e}xa6$ $19.\text{e}xa6$ $\text{d}d4$ $20.\text{a}3\pm$ and White has an overwhelming advantage, because Black has no compensation for the pawn, Korobov – Akopian, Moscow 2008) $14.\text{h}3$ $b5$ $15.\text{a}xb6$ $\text{d}xb6$ $16.\text{e}e1$ $\text{d}fd7$ $17.\text{d}b3$ $\text{d}e5$ $18.\text{f}4$. Now even after Black's relatively best move $18...\text{d}e7$ (if $18...\text{c}4$ $19.\text{d}a5$ $\text{c}c5+$ $20.\text{d}f1$ $\text{d}d3$ $21.\text{e}xd3$ $\text{c}xd3$ $22.\text{c}xd3\pm$ Black's compensation for the pawn was insufficient in the game Van Wely – Giri, Eindhoven 2010) with $19.\text{d}a5\pm$ White maintains a clear positional advantage.



8. $\text{e}f4!$?

This is a rarely used idea, but it is quite logical and deserves greater attention. Black's knight has been developed to $\text{d}7$ too early and with his last move White prevents the manoeuvre $\text{e}f8\text{-g}7$. However, it is also possible for

2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♞c3

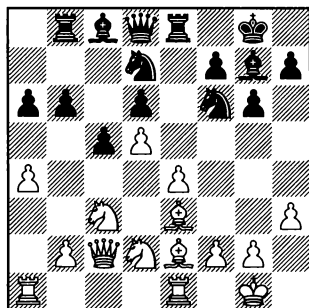
him to play 8.♞d3 ♞g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 – see Chapter 4.

8...♞h5

After 8...♞e7 9.♞d3 a6 10.0-0 ♞g7 Black must consider the possible breakthrough in the centre: 11.e5!? ♞xe5 12.♞xe5 dxe5 13.♞xe5 0-0 14.♞e1↑

It is safer for him to play 8...a6!?, and if 9.a4 (9.♞d3!? – this move has not been tested in tournament practice yet – and if 9...b5 10.0-0↑ Black falls considerably behind in the development of his kingside, while after 9...♞g4 10.0-0 ♞ge5 11.♞xe5 ♞xe5 12.♞xe5 dxe5 13.a4±, Black's bishop-pair is not dangerous, while White has a clear-cut plan of blockading his opponent's queenside with the help of a4-a5 and later ♞a4-b6) the game transposes after 9...♞e7 10.♞d3 ♞g7 11.h3 0-0 12.0-0 to a well-known theoretical position – see variation A1 in Chapter 8.

9.♞g5 ♞e7 10.♞h6 ♞f8 11.♞e3 a6 12.a4 ♞g7 13.♞e2!? 0-0 14.0-0 ♞e8 15.♞d2 ♞hf6 16.♞e1 ♞b8 17.♞c2 b6 18.h3±

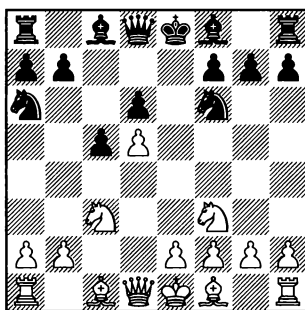


White has a stable positional

advantage, since Black has difficulty in organizing any active counterplay, A.Aleksandrov – Id-risov, Nakhchivan 2012. This game continued: 18...♞b7 19.♞f1 h6 20.f4 ♞c7 21.♞c4 ♞h7?! 22.♞d3 ♞c8 23.♞f3 ♞a8 24.♞ad1 ♞b8 25.♞d2 ♞hf8 26.♞de2 ♞c8 27.♞d2 ♞a7 28.b3 ♞h7 29.e5 dxe5 30.d6 ♞df8 31.♞xe5 ♞f5 32.d7 ♞d8 33.♞xf7+ ♞h8 34.♞c4+– and White had a decisive advantage.

B2f) 6...♞a6

This move does not have a reliable reputation because Black is determining the placement of his knight too early.



7.e4!?

This is White's most energetic response.

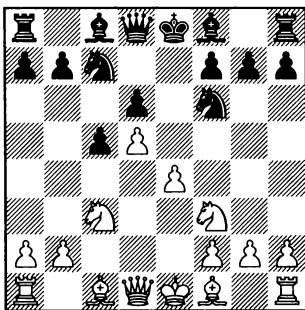
7...♞c7

It is rather dubious for Black to play here 7...♞g4?! in view of 8.h3. Now if he continues in a principled fashion with 8...♞h5?! (after 8...♞xf3 9.♞xf3± his position is clearly worse, since Black

Chapter 1

loses after 9...g6?! to 10.e5! dxe5 11.d6+–) then after 9.e5! ♖xf3 (9...♘d7 10.e6+–; 9...dxe5 10.g4 ♖g6 11.♗b5+ ♘d7 12.♘xe5+–) 10.♗xf3 ♗e7 (10...dxe5 11.♗b5+ ♘d7 12.d6 ♖xd6 13.0–0+– followed by ♗fd1) 11.♗b5+ ♘d7 12.♘e4 (it is also sufficient for White to play here simply 12.0–0+–) 12...♗xe5 13.♗f4 ♗f5 (13...♗xb2 14.♖xd7+ ♘xd7 15.0–0+–) 14.g4 ♗g6 15.♗d3! f5 16.gxf5 ♗f7 17.♘g5 ♗e7+ 18.♘e6+– Black ends up in a hopeless position.

It is also too risky for Black to play 7...g6?! 8.♗b5+ ♗d7 9.0–0± and his position is very precarious. White leads in development and has the better piece-coordination, for example after 9...♘c7 (if 9...♖g7 White he has the powerful reply 10.♗f4±) 10.♗e2!? ♖g7 (10...♖g4? 11.e5+–) 11.♗f4 ♖c8 (11...♗e7? 12.e5+–; 11...♖g4 12.♗a4+ ♗d7 13.♗b3±) 12.♗a4+ ♘f8 (12...♗d7 13.♗b3±) 13.b4!? b6 14.bxc5 bxc5 15.♗ab1± White retains a great positional advantage.



8.♗d3

This is a simple and natural move, after which White has a slight but stable positional edge.

Here it would also be interesting to try out another idea which has not yet been tested in serious tournament practice: 8.♗c4!?, with the plan of organizing the central pawn-break e4–e5 as quickly as possible. After 8...g6?! 9.0–0 ♗g7 10.e5 dxe5 11.d6 ♘e6 12.♘xe5 0–0 13.♗e1± White has a great advantage.

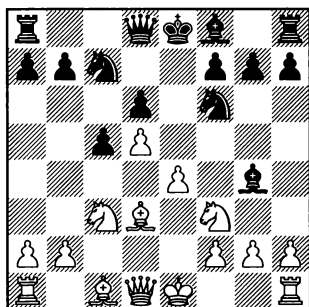
8...♖g4

For 8...♗e7 9.h3!? 0–0 10.a4 – see variation **B2c**.

After 8...a6, besides 9.a4±, White can play 9.0–0!? ♗e7 (Black would be too slow with 9...g6?! in view of 10.♗e1±; while after 9...b5?! 10.a4! White will either destroy Black's queenside: 10...c4?! 11.axb5!? cxd3 12.b6±, or block it with 10...b4 11.♘b1±) 10.h3 0–0 (10...b5?! 11.a4! b4 12.♘b1↑) 11.a4↑ with an obvious positional advantage.

After 8...g6 9.0–0 ♗g7 (after 9...♖g4?! 10.♗a4+!? Black loses after both 10...♘d7? 11.e5 ♖xf3 12.♗e1!+– and 10...♗d7? 11.♘b5 ♘d8 12.♖g5 ♗e7 13.e5+– and even after the best response 10...♗d7 with 11.♗b3± White's great advantage is beyond doubt.) 10.h3 0–0 11.♗e1 there arises a position from variation **C2**, Chapter 4.

2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♞c3



9.h3

Here White could also consider 9.♞a4+!? ♞d7 (9...♞d7 10.♞c2±; 9...♞d7 10.♞b5±) 10.♞d2± again retaining the better prospects.

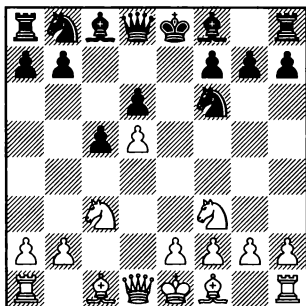
9...♞h5

After the exchange 9...♞xf3 10.♞xf3↑ White maintains a stable initiative.

10.g4 ♞g6 11.♞h4± White has a small but enduring positional advantage.

Chapter 2

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.d5 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.♘c3



Players who play this line with White need to be prepared to face the two most common moves here: **A) 6...g6** and **B) 6...a6**.

A) 6...g6

We shall take a look at two possibilities for White here, in order to increase our understanding of the intricacies of this position: **A1) 7.e4** and **A2) 7.h3**.

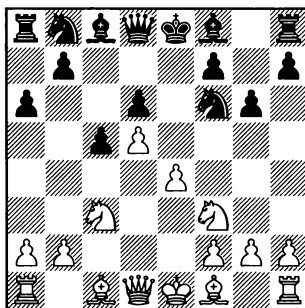
A1) 7.e4

This is an attractive move, but it enables Black to reach a complicated position with quite sufficient counterplay.

7...a6!?

This is the point. Now White is unable to attain his strategic goals

for this pawn-structure – not to allow his opponent to advance with b7-b5 and at the same time to prevent his knight being pinned with ♕g4.



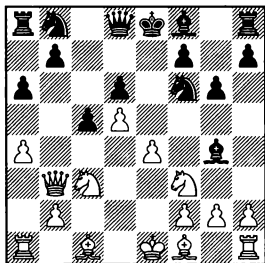
8.♕d3

This move is a must, because if White plays 8.h3 Black responds with 8...b5!? after which the position becomes very complicated and rather unclear. If White wishes to fight for a stable positional advantage, he should not allow this.

After 8.a4, however, Black plays 8...♕g4! with quite sufficient counterplay. Now the queen sortie 9.♖b3 (the lines 9.h3 ♕xf3

2...e6 3. ♖f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. ♖c3 g6 7.e4

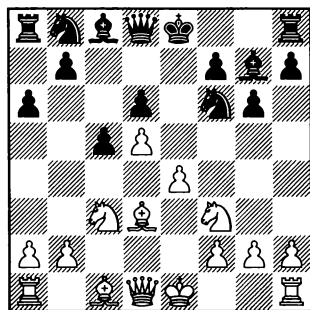
10. ♖xf3 ♗g7=, 9. ♗d3 ♖bd7= and 9. ♗e2 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0= all lead to complex positions with chances for both sides and, as tournament practice shows, they present no danger to Black)



can be answered with 9... ♗xf3!? 10. ♖xb7 (or 10.gxf3 ♖c7) 10... ♗xg2!? 11. ♗xg2 ♖bd7 12.0-0 ♗e7!? (12... ♗g7 13. ♗f4!? 13.f4 (13. ♗h6 ♖g4) 13...0-0∞, when the position is very complicated but Black's prospects are by no means worse, as practice has shown.

8... ♗g7

The line: 8...b5 9.0-0 (or 9. a4±) 9... ♗g7 10.a4!?± gives White an edge.

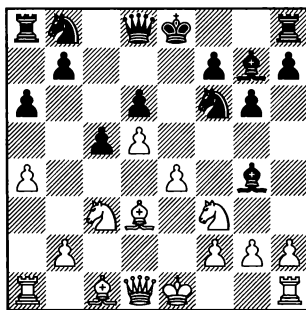


9.a4

The essence of the position remains the same after 9.0-0 0-0! (if 9...b5 10.a4!?±, with an edge to White) and now White must make a choice. If he plays 10.h3, preventing ♗g4, then Black replies 10...b5!± with a rather unclear position, while if White prevents b7-b5 and responds with 10.a4, then Black plays 10... ♗g4!±, with a complicated position and chances for both sides.

9... ♗g4!±

This energetic move radically solves Black's problem with the development of his light-squared bishop. In this position it is doubtful whether White can fight for even a minimal opening advantage. The routine move 9...0-0 would grant White a tempo to play 10.h3!±, with which he achieves his goals, both preventing the pin on the knight and retaining his space advantage.



10.h3

White does not achieve much with 10. ♖b3, because after 10... ♗xf3 11.gxf3 (it is too risky to play 11. ♖xb7?! ♗xg2 12. ♗g1 and here

Chapter 2

Black is clearly better after 12... ♖bd7 13. ♙xg2 0–0+, or 12... ♙xe4!? 13. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 14. ♙xa8 0–0 with the idea of 15. ♙xe4 ♙e7) 11... ♙c7 (11... ♜bd7!? 12. ♙xb7 0–0= with the initiative and excellent compensation for the pawn) 12.0–0 ♜bd7∞ Black's prospects are not at all worse.

After 10.0–0, his simplest response is 10... ♜bd7, with equality – 11.h3 (11. ♙e2 0–0=) 11... ♙xf3 12. ♙xf3 ♜e5!? (12...0–0= is also good) 13. ♙e2 ♜xd3 14. ♙xd3 ♜d7!?=

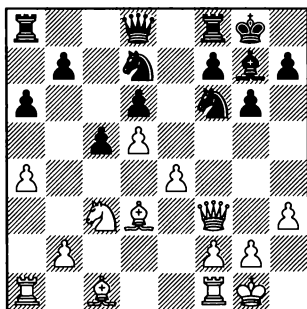
10... ♙xf3 11. ♙xf3 0–0

The move 11... ♜bd7 is also playable and leads to an equal position.

12.0–0

Black need not fear 12. ♙f4 because after 12... ♜h5!? 13. ♙h2 ♙e7 14.0–0 ♜d7∞ he has no problems whatsoever and his chances are at least equal.

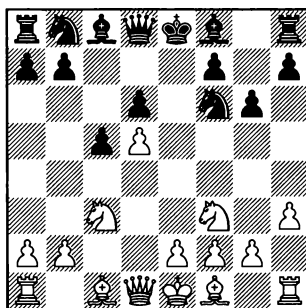
12... ♜bd7



Black has very good counterplay. We should mention that in such pawn-structures White's bishop pair is not dangerous for

the opponent. The game Blistra – Van Wely, Curacao 2011 continued 13. ♙d1 ♙e8 14. ♙e1 ♙c8= 15. a5?! c4!? 16. ♙c2 ♙c5!? 17. ♙a4?! ♙c7 18. ♙f4 ♜h5 19. ♙h2 ♙e5 20. ♙xe5 ♜xe5+ with a clear advantage to Black.

A2) 7.h3!



This is White's best move order and it considerably reduces Black's possibilities.

7... ♙e7

This move is played only rarely. Generally Black is trying to reach positions from the 7...a6 8. a4 variation, which will be covered thoroughly via the move-order 1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♜f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. ♜c3 a6 7.a4 g6 8.h3 – see variation B.

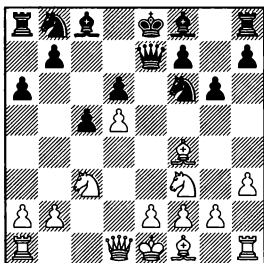
7... ♙g7 8.e4 0–0 (8...a6 9.a4; the move 8... ♜bd7 reduces Black's possibilities after 9. ♙d3, transposing to Chapter 4) 9. ♙d3 – see Chapters 4–14.

8.e4

This is White's most popular move in this position. However,

2...e6 3. ♖f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. ♖c3 g6 7.h3

the rarely played move 8. ♘f4!?, with the threat of ♖b5, also deserves consideration. Black is almost forced to reply with 8...a6,



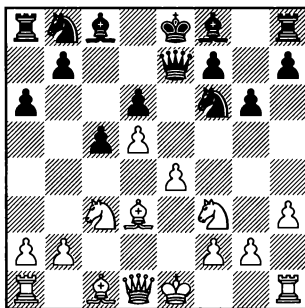
but then White can continue with 9. ♖a4+!? (he is not forced to play 9.a4, transposing to the familiar tabia of variation **B** – see 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♖f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6. ♖c3 a6!? 7.a4 g6 8.h3!? ♗e7 9. ♘f4, in which Black still has problems but the play is very complicated) creating serious difficulties for the opponent in a relatively simple position. For example: 9... ♖bd7 (9... ♖fd7? 10. ♖e4+–; 9... ♘d7?! 10. ♖a5±; or 9... ♗d7!? 10. ♖xd7+ ♖bxd7 11.a4±, reaching an endgame in which White has extra space and a clear advantage in view of Black's weak d6-pawn) 10. ♖b5 axb5 11. ♖xa8 ♖b6 12. ♖a5 ♖bxd5 13. ♘g5± and Black's compensation for the exchange is insufficient.

8...a6

Obviously Black cannot play 8... ♖xe4?? owing to 9. ♖a4+– and he loses a piece.

After 8... ♘g7 9. ♘d3 0–0 10. 0–0± there is a transposition to a position from the main line, covered under the move order 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. ♖c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7. ♘d3 ♘g7 8.h3 0–0 9. ♖f3 ♗e7 10.0–0± where the move ♗d8–e7 is very rarely played and is not to be recommended in such pawn structures.

9. ♘d3



9...b5

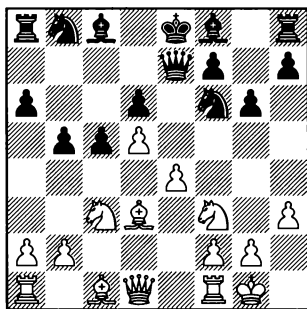
This active move is a bit risky for Black, since he lags behind in development and the early sortie of his queen to e7 and the pawn-advance b7-b5 do not combine well together when his kingside is undeveloped. Now the play becomes sharp, concrete and semi-forced, because of the possible e4–e5 break and the possibility of White undermining Black's pawn structure on the queenside with a2–a4.

It is safer to play 9... ♘g7 10.a4 0–0 11.0–0±, transposing to a position in the main line which we

Chapter 2

have analysed via the move order: 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘f3 g6 7.e4 ♔g7 8.♔d3 0-0 9.h3 a6 10.a4 ♖e7 11.0-0, where White has a stable advantage owing to his extra space, but in this variation the game has a very complicated positional character.

10.0-0



10...♔g7

It is no better to play 10...♘bd7 11.a4!? b4 (11...c4?! 12.♘d4! and here Black loses after 12...♙b7? 13.♘c6 ♔xc6 14.dxc6+-, while if 12...♘e5 13.♘c6±, with the idea of 13...♘xc6 14.dxc6 cxd3 15.♔g5 and Black is again on the verge of disaster) 12.♘b1 ♔g7 13.♘bd2 0-0 14.♙e1↑ with a considerable positional advantage for White.

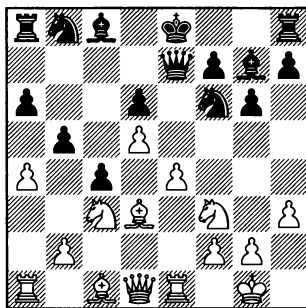
11.a4!?

The other possibility here is 11.e5 dxe5 12.d6!? (it is less energetic for White to play 12.♘xe5 since after 12...0-0 13.♙e1 ♔e8!?∞, the position remains rather unclear) 12...♖d8 13.♘xe5 0-0 14.♔e2±

11...c4

After 11...b4 12.♘b1 0-0 13.♘bd2↑ White's great positional advantage is obvious.

12.♙e1!?



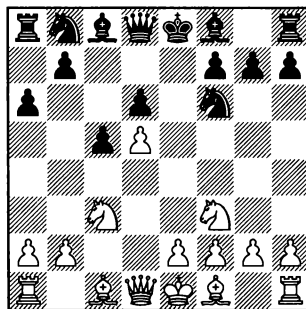
12...0-0

Here 12...cxd3? is bad, in view of 13.e5 0-0 14.exf6 ♖xf6 15.♔g5 ♖f5 16.g4 ♖d7 17.♙e7 ♖d8 18.♙xf7 ♖b6 19.♙xf8+ ♔xf8 20.axb5+-

13.♔f1 b4 14.♘b1±

White is better in this position.

B) 6...a6



7.a4

This is White's best move, restricting his opponent's possibilities.

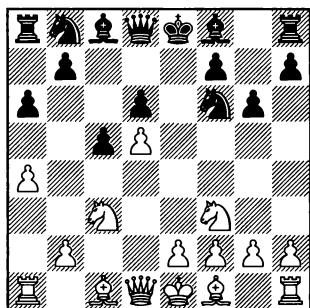
2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♞c3 a6 7.a4 g6 8.h3 ♚e7

After 7.e4 g6 8.♙d3 (8.a4 ♙g4!?, 8.h3 b5) 8...♙g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 (or 10.a4 ♙g4!?) 10...b5 Black has many more possibilities to create active counterplay, as I have already covered in variation **A1**.

7...g6

It is not advisable for Black to opt for 7...♙f5 in view of 8.♞d2!?

7...♚e7?! – this version of the variation which we shall analyse below – 7...g6 8.h3 ♚e7 – is much worse for Black.



8.h3!?

White plans to continue with e2-e4, but he does not wish to play 8.e4 immediately, because of 8...♙g4!?, as previously mentioned.

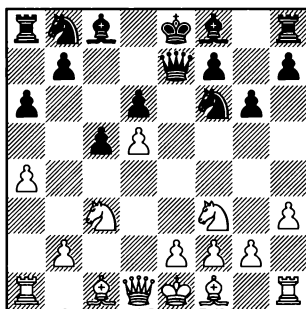
8...♚e7!?

This move has become quite fashionable, because it is the only way for Black to prevent White's thematic pawn advance e2-e4, followed by ♙d3.

This move, instead of 8...♙g7, has been played lately by famous grandmasters such as Leko, Gelfand, Gashimov, Nisipeanu and

many others who play this defence for Black.

The idea of White's prophylactic 8th move is that after 8...♙g7 9.e4 0-0 10.♙d3, he succeeds in reaching one of the key positions of the main line, i.e. 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♞c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3!? 0-0 9.♟f3 a6 10.a4!?, in which he maintains a stable advantage thanks to his extra space.



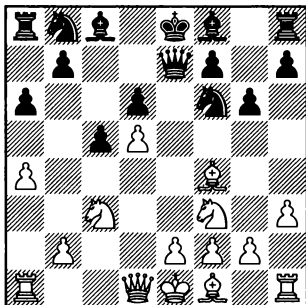
9.♙f4!?

This move is considered to be White's best according to contemporary theory, if he wishes to fight for an opening initiative, and quite deservedly so. His other possibilities are 9.♙g5, 9.g3 and 9.♞d2, but they are less dangerous for Black and are only rarely encountered in modern tournament practice.

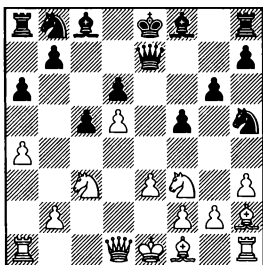
(diagram)

9...♙g7

For 9...♞bd7 10.e3 ♙g7 11.♙e2!? 0-0 12.0-0 – see variation **B3**.

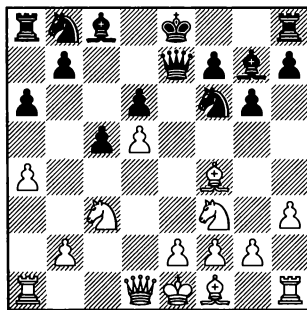


Black does not achieve much with 9...♖h5, since after 10.♗h2!? (White's position is also better after 10.♗g5 f6 11.♗d2 f5 12.♗g5±) 10...f5 (for 10...♗g7 11.e3 0-0 12.♗e2 – see variation **B1**) 11.e3 White's prospects are clearly better. This position has been tested very rarely in tournament practice. One example which deserves serious attention is the game E.Hansen – Langer, Stillwater 2012:



11...f4 12.♗d3 ♗h6 (12...fxe3? 13.♖e4) 13.0-0 0-0 14.♞c2!? (in an earlier game Vallejo Pons – Topalov, Monte Carlo 2004, White tried 14.exf4 ♖xf4 15.♞e1 ♞d8 16.♗c4 and after Black's careless response 16...b6?! 17.♗g3 ♞a7 18.♖e4 ♗g7 19.♞a3!?± White

ended up with a clear positional advantage; also playable is 14.♞e1!?, and if 14...♞d8 he has the strong reply 15.♞c2!?±, while if 14...fxe3 15.fxe3± White's threats of ♖e4 and e4-e5 are very dangerous for Black and are almost impossible to parry) and Black must constantly worry about White's threat to sacrifice his bishop on g6, or even just the simple move ♞ae1, with an overwhelming advantage in development. Even after Black's best defence 14...fxe3 (in the game we are following Black played 14...♗g7?! 15.♞ae1 ♞d8 16.♖e4±, but he ended up hopelessly behind in development in an apparently defenceless position) 15.♗xg6 ♖f4!? (15...hxg6? 16.♞xg6+ ♞g7 17.♞xh5 exf2+ 18.♞xf2 ♗e3 19.♗xd6+–) 16.♗e4 ♖xh3+ (16...exf2+ 17.♖h1!±) 17.gxh3 ♗xh3 18.♖h1 ♗xf1 19.♞xf1↑ White's prospects are clearly better.



10.e3!?

This is a very modern move in the fight for an opening advantage.

2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♞c3 a6 7.a4 g6 8.h3 ♚e7

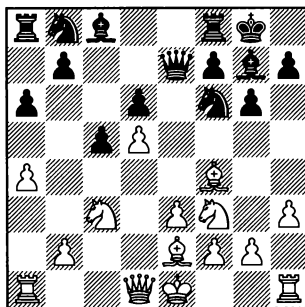
It is much less popular for White to continue here with 10. ♟d2, since after Black's simplest response 10...0-0 (safer than 10... ♟bd7, when after 11.♞c4 ♟e5 12. ♟xe5 dxe5 13.e4 0-0 14.♟e2±, White maintains a slight but stable edge) 11.♞c4 ♟d8 12.e3 (White does not achieve much with 12. ♟b3 ♟e8 13.e3, since after 13... ♟d7 14.♟e2 ♟e5 15.♟b6 ♟b8 16. 0-0 ♟d7 17.♞c4 ♟e5 18.♟b6, in the game Sebenik – Sax, Celje 2004, the opponents agreed to a draw in a position with approximately equal chances) 12...♟e8, but even then, after 13.♟e2 ♟d7 14.0-0 the complex strategic play is somewhat favourable for White.

10...0-0 11.♟e2!?

This is White's main move here and the most fashionable.

The rarer 11.♟d3 provides Black with more possibilities of creating counterplay – 11...♟h5!? (the position of the bishop on d3 often helps Black to exchange more minor pieces, which is in his favour; or 11...♟bd7 12.0-0 ♟e8 13.e4 ♟b8 14.♟e1 ♟e5 15.♟xe5 ♟xe5 16.♟xe5 ♟xe5= Xu Jun – De Firmian, Yerevan 1996, with an approximately equal position) 12. ♟h2 f5 13.0-0 ♟d7 14.♟d2 ♟e5 15.♟e2 ♟f6 (here 15...f4!? deserves consideration, with the idea of 16.♟xh5 fxe3 17.fxe3 ♟xf1+ with very complicated play after 18.♟xf1 gxh5∞ or 18.♟xf1 gxh5 19.♟xh5 ♟d3∞, where Black's

prospects are not worse) 16.f4?! (it is more accurate for White to play 16.a5!?) 16...♟d3! 17.♟h1 ♟b4± and in the game Liu – Zhao Zong, North Geelong 2012, Black seized the initiative.



Here it is worth examining three possibilities for Black: **B1) 11...♟h5**, **B2) 11...♟fd7** and **B3) 11...♟bd7**.

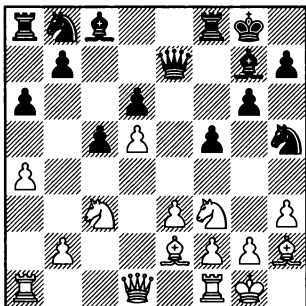
I will also mention that it is dubious for Black to play 11... ♟e4?!, because of 12.♟xe4 ♟xe4 13.♟d2 ♟xd5 (13...♟xg2? 14. ♟f3+-; 13...♟e7?! 14.♟c4 ♟d8 15. a5±) 14.♟c4 ♟e4 (14...♟xd1+ 15. ♟xd1±) 15.♟c1 ♟d8 16.♟f3↑ with a very strong and dangerous initiative for the pawn.

B1) 11...♟h5 12.♟h2 f5 13.0-0

(diagram)

13...f4

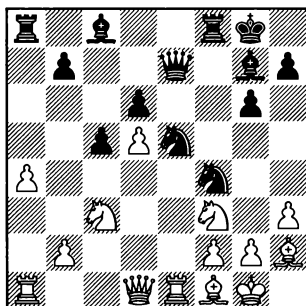
Black is clearly worse after 13...♟d7?! 14.♟d2! ♟hf6 15.♟c4 ♟e8 16.a5!↑ with a positional bind, Del Rey – Rosito, Mar del Plata 1992.



14.exf4 ♖xf4 15.♗e1 ♜d7

This is in fact a forced pawn sacrifice. After 15...♜xe2+? 16.♗xe2 ♜d8 17.♜e4+-, Black cannot save his d6-pawn; marginally better is 15...♜d8?! 16.♜e4!±

16.♙xa6 ♜e5 17.♙f1



The latest tournament practice has shown that Black's compensation for the pawn is insufficient.

17...♜xf3+!?

It is inferior to play 17...♜f7?! owing to 18.♜g5 ♜e7 (the piece-sacrifice 18...♜xh3+?! 19.gxh3 ♜xf2+ 20.♜h1 is not correct, because after 20...♜h4?! 21.♜ce4 ♙g4 22.hxg4 ♜xg4 23.♙h3 ♜xh2 24.♜xh2 ♙e5+ 25.♜g2+- White,

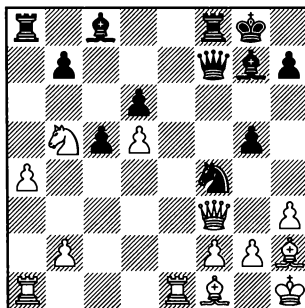
in the game A. Aleksandrov – Rathnakaran, Chennai 2012, easily parried his opponent's attack, while capturing a second pawn with 20...♜xb2 21.♜c1± would not have been much better) 19.♜ce4 (also good is 19.♜ge4!?) 19...h6 20.♜e6 ♙xe6 21.dxe6 ♜ad8 22.♙xf4 ♜xf4 23.♜d2!? g5 24.♜d5± with a considerable positional advantage to White, Eljanov – Zufic, Sibenik 2009.

18.♜xf3 ♜f7 19.♜h1!?

White is defending against the threat of 19...♜xh3+, refraining from the exchange on f4 for the time being in order not to present his opponent with the advantage of the bishop pair.

19...g5 20.♜b5!?

This is better than 20.♙xf4 ♜xf4 21.♜xf4 ♜xf4 22.♜e8+ ♜f8 23.♜xf8+ ♜xf8=, since in the game Lon Yiping – Gao Rui, Taizhou 2012, Black obtained the bishop pair as adequate compensation for the pawn.



20...♙d7

Now White must exchange pieces on the f4-square. After

2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♞c3 a6 7.a4 g6 8.h3 ♚e7

20...♙xb2?! 21.♞xd6±, or 20...
♚g6 21.♚b3!?↑, Black's defence is
very difficult.

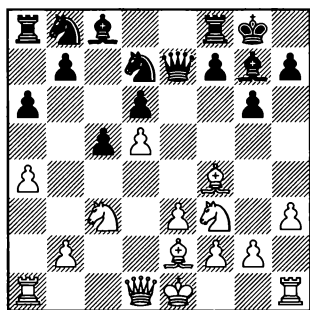
21.♙xf4 ♚xf4 22.♚xf4 ♞xf4
23.♞xd6 ♙xb2

But not 23...♞xf2?!, because of
24.♞e4±

24.♞a2±

Black has the bishop pair, but
as compensation for the pawn it is
not enough.

B2) 11...♞fd7



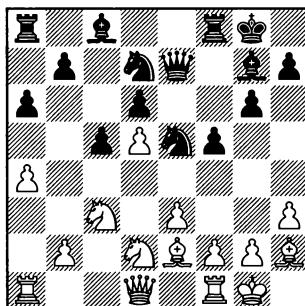
12.0-0

It might also be interesting for
White to try a move which has not
yet been tested in tournament
practice – 12.♙g5!?, with the aim
of disrupting the coordination of
Black's pieces. Now after 12...♙f6
(or 12...f6 13.♙h4±) 13.♙h6 ♙g7
(13...♞e8 14.0-0 ♞e5 15.♞d2±)
14.♙xg7 ♜xg7 15.0-0 ♞e5 16.
♞d2!?± White has a stable advan-
tage.

12...♞e5 13.♞d2!?

White plays in a way which is
typical for such pawn-structures,
trying to avoid if possible the ex-
change of knights.

13...♞bd7 14.♙h2 f5



In a semi-forced way we have
reached a mini-tabia for this vari-
ation, in which contemporary
tournament practice has shown
that White has the initiative.

15.♚c2!?

This is White's usual move in
this position, planning ♞ae1.

It might also be interesting to
test the rarely played move 15.
♞e1!? ♞f6 (it is dubious for Black
to play 15...g5?!, because of 16.f4
♞f7 17. ♞c4± with a clear posi-
tional advantage for White, Kuli-
cov – Poloch, Frydek Mistek 2011)
16.a5!, after which White's pros-
pects are better. The position is
much easier for White to play,
thanks to his space advantage.
The game Sargissian – Fier, Bursa
2010, continued 16...♙d7 17.f4
(17.♚b3!?±) 17...♞f7 18.♙d3 ♞ae8
19.♚b3 ♙c8 20.♞c4±, with a slight
but stable positional edge for
White.

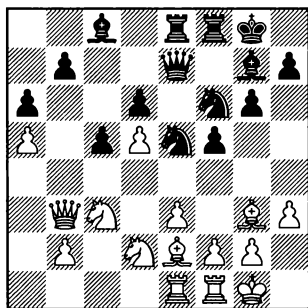
15...♞f6

Or 15...♞b8 16.♞ae1 ♚d8 17.f4
♞f7 18.e4 fxe4 19.♞dx4 ♞f6 20.

Chapter 2

♖g5↑ with the initiative for White, Bocharov – Poluljahov, St. Petersburg 2001.

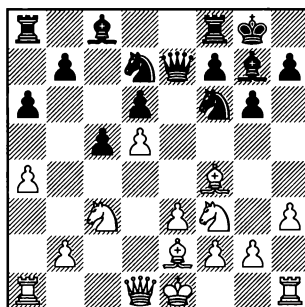
16. ♖ae1 ♗d7 17. a5!? ♖ae8 18. ♗b3 ♗c8 19. ♗g3±



White has a stable advantage, since he has extra space and a clear-cut plan of action. He should gradually prepare f2-f4, followed by ♖c4. Black will be forced to wait, since he does not have an active plan for organizing counterplay. For example, in the diagram position it is dubious to play 19... g5?!. In the game Peng Zhaogin – De Firmian, Stockholm 2004, White could have demonstrated the advantages of his position by playing 20. ♗xe5! dxe5 (20... ♗xe5?! 21. ♖f3 ♗e7 22. ♖xg5+–) 21. d6+ ♗f7 22. ♗c4 ♗e6 23. ♖a4!?±, or 23. e4!?±. In both variations Black's position is very difficult.

B3) 11... ♖bd7!?

Black's most fashionable move.



12.0–0 ♖e8

This is the most often played move in tournament practice and the resulting position is a very modern tabia for this variation.

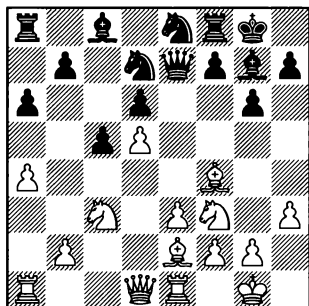
For 12... ♖h5 13. ♗h2 f5 14. ♖d2 – see variation **B1**.

Among Black's alternatives it appears that only the move 12... ♖b8 deserves any attention. Besides 13. ♖e1 ♖e8 14. ♗f1!?, which transposes to a position which we shall analyse below, in the text of the main variation, White can also try the very rarely played move 13. a5!?, retaining some positional pressure and initiative. The game Maletin – Kopylov, Samara 2012, continued 13... ♖e8 14. ♖d2 ♖e5 15. ♗c2 f5 16. ♗g3 ♖f6 17. ♖fe1 ♖e8 18. f4 ♖f7 19. ♖c4± and White preserves stable positional pressure.

13. ♖e1

The most popular move. White makes a useful prophylactic move, freeing the f1-square for his light-squared bishop and preparing the advance of his e-pawn.

2...e6 3.♟f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♞c3 a6 7.a4 g6 8.h3 ♔e7

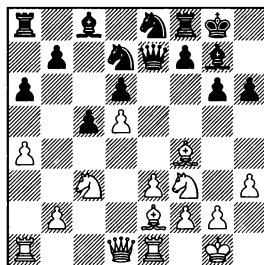


13...♟b8

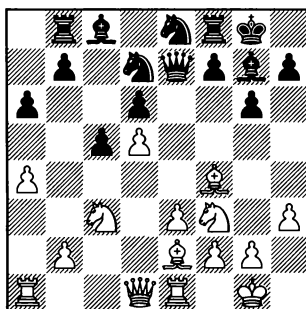
Black has also tried 13...♞e5, which White should answer with the standard manoeuvre 14.♞d2!? (the moves 14.a5 and 14.♞b3 also retain somewhat the better chances) and after 14...f5 (after 14...♟b8 15.♟a3!? ♞d7 16.♟b3 ♞c7 17.a5 f5 18.♞h2 g5 19.f4! the position offers considerably better prospects for White, Zakhartsov – Petrisor, Aix-les-Bains 2011) 15.a5!? ♞f6 16.♞b3! with positional pressure and the initiative.

In the game Ippolito – Kraai, Lubbock 2010, Black tried the rarely played 13...♞c7. However, after 14.a5 ♟b8 15.♟a4!? ♞e5 16.♞xe5 ♞xe5 17.♟e4! ♟d8 (17...f5? 18.♟xe5 dxe5 19.d6+–) 18.♞xe5 dxe5 19.f4 f6 20.fxe5 fxe5 21.b4 (21.♟c4!?± could have stabilised White's positional edge in even simpler manner) 21...cxb4 (21...♞f5 22.♞b3!?) 22.♞b3! ♜g7 23.♟xb4± White had an overwhelming advantage.

It seems too slow for Black to play 13...h6.



A possible continuation is 14.a5!? (White can also try 14.e4 g5 15.♞g3 ♞e5 16.a5 ♞xf3+ 17.♞xf3 ♟b8 and here, besides 18.♞b3 18...♞e5 19.♞xe5 ♔xe5 20.♞a4±, which provided him with a clearly better position in the game Barlov – Ostojic, Vrnjacka Banja 2010, 18.♞a4!?± would be very good for White, with the idea of 18...♞d7?! 19.♞xc5+–) 14...♞c7 15.♟c1 f5 and now 16.♞a4!?± (after 16.♞b3 ♟b8 17.♞a4±, White had only a minimal edge in the game Aronian – Gashimov, Linares 2010), planning b2-b4. Black must now play very carefully; for example, after: 16...♞b5 17.♞d2 ♞e5 18.♞b6 ♟b8 19.b4 cxb4 20.♞xb5 axb5 21.♞b3+– his position is strategically lost.



14.♞f1!?

Chapter 2

Nowadays this is the most fashionable plan for White.

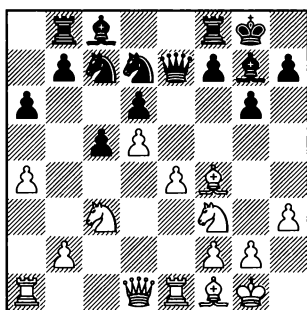
It seems a bit premature to play 14.e4. After 14...♖e5!? 15. ♖xe5 ♙xe5 16. ♙xe5 ♜xe5 17. ♞d2 ♖f6 18. ♙f1 g5= Black reached a quite playable position in the game Barlov – Hulak, Yugoslavia 1987.

14...♖c7

After the immediate 14...♖e5 White can continue with 15. ♖xe5 ♙xe5 16. ♙xe5 ♜xe5 17. f4 ♜f6 18. ♞d2± with a stable positional advantage.

15.e4

The knight on c7 is misplaced and Black's has a lasting disadvantage.



15...♖e5

The exchange of the minor pieces should facilitate Black's defence, since he lacks space.

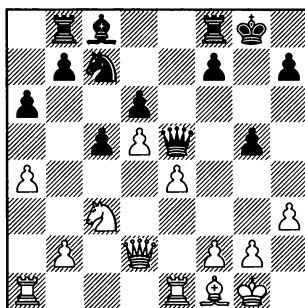
I should mention that the attempt to play actively on the queenside with 15...b5?, does not work because of 16.e5!+-

After 15...♞d8 16. ♞d2 b6 (Black's position becomes even worse after 16...b5?! 17. axb5 ♖xb5 18. ♖xb5 axb5 19. ♙a7±) 17. ♙ab1

♙b7 18. b4±, White exerts powerful pressure, Van Wely – Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

15...f6 16. ♖d2!? (16.a5!? and now 16...♖e5?! is bad owing to 17. ♖a4±, while if 16...b5 White is better after 17. axb6 ♙xb6 18. ♜c2!?± with the idea of ♖d2-c4) 16...♖e5 (16...b5?! 17. axb5 axb5 18. ♙a7±) 17. ♙g3!↑ with the idea of f2-f4.

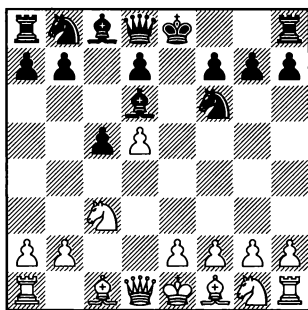
16. ♖xe5!? ♙xe5 17. ♙xe5 ♜xe5 18. ♞d2 g5



This position was reached in the game Cheparinov – S.Kovacevic, Pontevedra 2004. White continued with the move 19.g3± and retained the somewhat preferable position. However, it is much better to play 19.b4! cxb4 20. ♖d1!? a5 (if Black accepts the rook sacrifice with 20...♜xa1 21. ♖b2 he risks even more: 21... ♜xe1?! 22. ♜xe1± a5? 23. ♜c1+-, or 21...♜a3 22. ♜xg5+ ♖h8 23. ♜f6+ ♖g8 24. ♙e3 ♖e8 25. ♞d4 b5 26. axb5 axb5 27. ♙g3+ ♜xg3 28. fxxg3↑ with a strong initiative for White) 21. ♖b2 b6 22. ♖c4 ♜f6 23. ♜e3± with more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

Chapter 3

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 ♙d6



Strangely enough, this awkward-looking move, instead of the usual and natural 5...d6, is played quite often in contemporary tournament practice. My attitude towards such eccentric moves is rather sceptical and I think that from the point of view of logical chess the move 5...♙d6, in comparison to 5...d6, is simply second-rate. However, the positions arising from it are non-standard and not very well explored yet; most importantly, they are semi-closed and not easy to analyse with computer programs. Therefore there are many players who are willing to take their chances and play 5...♙d6, with the aim of leading their opponents astray by avoiding the well-trodden paths

after the usual move 5...d6. I should also like to mention that the variation has been tried by some very “serious” players such as Gashimov, Karjakin, etc.

In the diagram position, White should choose between: **A) 6.e4** and **B) 6.♘f3**.

His other possibilities, from the point of view of fighting for the advantage, provide him with fewer chances.

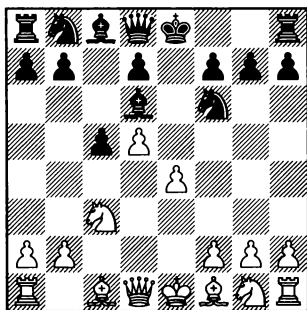
The active move 6.♙g5 is not dangerous for Black. Here are some interesting examples: 6...h6!? (6...♙c7 7.♖a4 h6 8.♖h4 d6 9.♙xf6 ♜xf6 10.♖xf6 gxf6 11.e3 a6 12.a4 ♙f5 13.♔d2 ♘d7 14.f4 ♙a5∞ with a very complicated position in which Black’s prospects are not worse, Mikheev – Dobrov, Moscow 2012; after 6...0–0, White should play cautiously, i.e. with 7.e3, or 7.♘f3, because after 7.e4 ♜e8 8.♙d3?! ♘xe4! 9.♘xe4 ♖xg5 10.♖e2?! ♗d8!± Black obtained a great advantage in the game Sertic – Gashimov, Sibenik 2010) 7.♙h4 0–0 (the standard manoeuvre 7...♙e5!? 8.♘f3 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3 d6 10.♘d2 0–0 11.e3 ♘bd7 12.♙e2 ♖e7 13.c4 ♘e5 14.♖b3 ♘g6= leads

to an approximately equal position, Kozul – Milchev, Crotian 2008.) 8.♟f3 ♖c7 9.e3 d6 10.♙e2 ♜bd7 11.0–0 a6 12.a4 ♞e8∞ with a complicated and approximately balanced position, Candella Perez – Anand, Canada de Calatrava 2007.

The move 6.g3, which leads to positions similar to variation **B**, enables Black to play 6...♙e5!? (the line 6...0–0 7.♟f3! hands the initiative to White after 7...♞e8 8.♙g2↑ or 7...♙c7 8.d6!? ♙a5 9.♙g2↑) 7.♙g2 d6 8.♟f3 ♙xc3+!? 9.bxc3 0–0 10.0–0 ♞e8± and White is only slightly better, because he does not have much apart from the bishop pair, Kovachev – Veng, Copenhagen 2009.

A) 6.e4!?

If we look at the position after 5...♙d6 from the point of view of strategy, then the move 6.e4!? seems more energetic and possibly even stronger than 6.♟f3!?. However, the positions arising are much more complicated and sharper and if White plays imprecisely, he can easily come unstuck.



We shall examine: **A1) 6...0–0** and **A2) 6...♙e5**.

It would be disastrous for Black to opt for 6...♙c7? because of 7.d6! ♙a5 8.e5 ♜e4 (8...♙g8 9.♙c4+–) 9.♙g4 0–0 (9...♜xc3 10.♙xg7 ♜e4+ 11.♜e2+–) 10.♙xe4+– Cheng – Akshat, North Geelong 2011.

Black should avoid 6...♙e7 7.♙d3 0–0 8.♟f3; White has a considerable lead in development and therefore a big advantage. In the game Sivic – Mieziš, Nova Gorica 2010, after 8...c4?! 9.♙xc4 ♜xe4 10.0–0 ♜xc3 11.bxc3, Black ended up in a very difficult position.

A1) 6...0–0

This move enables White to seize even more space in the centre with his pawns.

7.f4!?

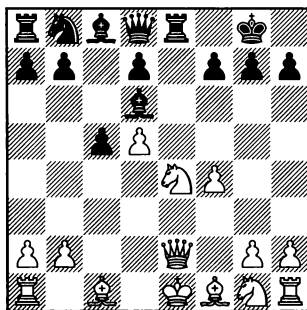
This is the most principled and fashionable move.

7...♜xe4

Black has nothing else.

After 7...♙c7?!, or 7...♞e8?! White continues simply with 8.e5±

8.♜xe4 ♞e8 9.♙e2!



2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♖c3 exd5 5.cxd5 ♕d6 6.e4

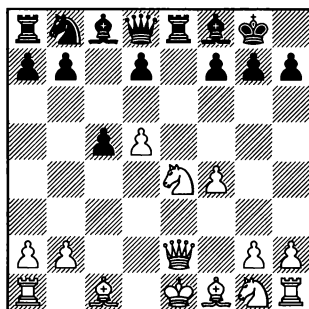
A position has arisen in which Black has yet to prove that he has sufficient compensation for the piece. The position is very complicated though and White must play very precisely.

9...♗f8

Black's attempt to regain his piece with the help of the move 9...f5?! leads after 10.♜xd6 ♖xe2+ 11.♗xe2 ♜h4+ 12.g3 ♜f6 13.♜xc8!? (13.♜b5±) 13...♜a6 14.♗b5 ♖xc8 15.♗xd7 ♖d8 16.♗e6+ ♜f8 17.♜f3± to a position in which White has two bishops and a rook for the queen.

After 9...♜a6 10.♜f3!?, it is again bad for Black to regain his piece, because of the possible capture on d6.

He can preface the advance of his f-pawn with 9...♗c7!?, but White can counter this with 10.g4!?, or 10.♜d1!? f5 11.d6 ♖xe4 12.dxc7 ♜xc7 13.♜f2±



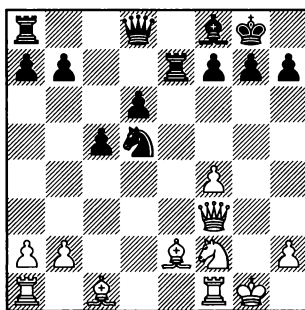
10.g4! d6 11.♜h3!? ♗xg4

After 11...h5!? 12.g5!? ♗g4 13.♜e3±, the pin along the e-file remains, but White still keeps his extra piece.

12.♜xg4 ♖xe4+ 13.♗e2

It is worth considering 13.♜f2!?, avoiding the pin.

13...♜d7 14.♜f2 ♜f6 15.♜f3 ♖e7 16.0-0 ♜xd5



17.♗d2

It is also good for White to play 17.f5!?

17...♜b6 18.♖ae1 ♜f6 19.♜b3 ♜c7 20.♗c3 ♖ae8 21.♗f3 ♖xe1 22.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 23.♖xe1± and despite the fact that there is formal material equality on the board (Black has three pawns for the piece) White's position is preferable and Black will have a hard struggle to draw, P.Nielsen – Karjakin, Beijing 2011.

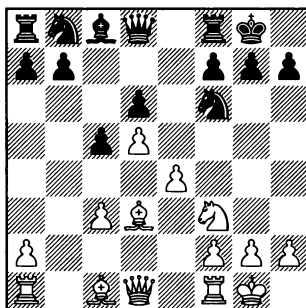
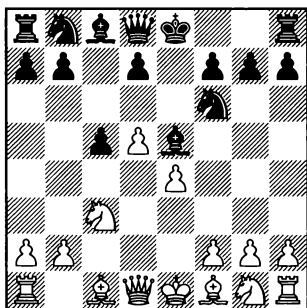
A2) 6...♗e5

(diagram)

This is a more prudent move for Black.

7.♗d3

It is worth considering 7.♜f3!?



♙xc3+ 8.bxc3 ♘xe4 9.♙d3 ♘f6 10.♙e2+ (10.d6 0–0 11.0–0) 10...♙e7 11.♙xe7+ ♔xe7 12.0–0 and White has the initiative and more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

7...d6 8.♘f3 ♙xc3+

It is rather dubious for Black to opt for 8...♙g4?!, in view of 9.♙a4+ ♙d7 (9...♘bd7 10.♘xe5 dxe5 11.f3 ♙h5 12.♙b3±) 10.♙b3± with a great positional advantage to White.

After 8...♘bd7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♙e1, White also retains a considerable positional advantage, since sooner or later Black will have to exchange his important dark-squared bishop for his opponent's knight. White also has more space.

9.bxc3 0–0 10.0–0

Another good move here is 10.♙c2!?, with the idea of countering 10...♙g4 with 11.♘d2!

(diagram)

10...♙g4!?

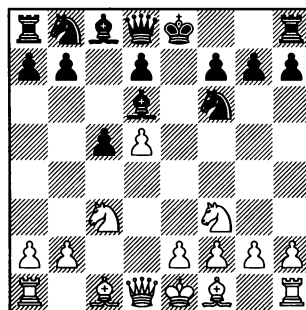
In the game Kalesis – Souleidis, Eretria 2011, Black decided to preserve his light-squared bishop with 10...♙e8. There followed 11.

♘d2! (another good move here is 11.♙c2!?↑ with the idea of bolstering his initiative after 11...c4 with 12.♙xc4 ♙xe4 13.♙d3 ♙e8 14.♙g5↑) 11...♘bd7 12.c4 ♘e5 13.♙c2 ♙d7 14.f4 ♘g6 15.a4± and Black has great difficulties in creating active counterplay.

After 10...c4 11.♙xc4 ♘xe4 12.♙d4 ♘c5 13.♙e1 h6 14.♙f4 ♙f5 15.♙g3 ♙g6 16.♙f4± White exerted powerful pressure against Black's d6-pawn in the game Coates – Slavin, Blackpool 2012.

11.h3 ♙xf3 12.♙xf3↑ and White maintains a stable positional advantage, thanks to his bishop pair.

B) 6.♘f3!?

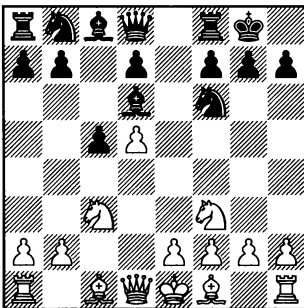


2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♖c3 exd5 5.cxd5 ♔d6 6.♜f3

This is a good positional move which provides White with at least a slight but stable edge. From a purely practical point of view it is worth serious consideration, because the resulting positions are quite stable and safe for White. He can fight for the advantage without any particular risk.

6...0-0

After 6...♔c7 the simplest way for White to fight for an opening advantage is 7.d6!? ♔a5 8.g3!? 0-0 9.♔g2, transposing after 9...♔e8 (or 9...♜e4?! 10.♞d3 ♞f6 11.0-0!? ♜xc3 12.bxc3 and White's lead in development is considerable if Black blunders with 12...♔xc3? 13.♜g5 g6 14.♜e4+–, or 12...♞xc3 13.♞b1↑; it looks more prudent for Black to play 9...♜c6, but even then after 10.0-0± White retains a slight but stable positional advantage thanks to his considerable lead in development) 10.0-0 or 10.♜d2 to variations of the main line which we shall analyse in detail via the move order 6...0-0 7.g3!? ♔e8 8.♔g2 ♔c7 9.d6!? ♔a5 10.0-0 or 10.♜d2.

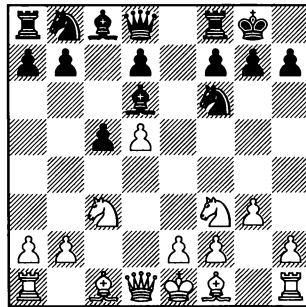


7.g3!?

This safe and solid set-up enables White to fight for an opening advantage without any particular risk.

Sharper and less stable positions arise after 7.e4 ♔e8!? 8.♔d3, for example: 8...♔c7 9.0-0 d6 10.h3 a6 11.a4 ♜bd7 12.♔g5 h6 13.♔h4 ♔b8 14.♜d2 ♜e5 15.♔e2 ♔a5∞ with a very complex situation in which Black's prospects are not worse, Santu – Thejku-mar, Gurgaon 2010, or 12.♔f4!? ♜f8 13.♔e1 ♜g6 14.♔h2 ♔b8∞ with a very complicated position, Korobov – Gashimov Warsaw 2010.

The situation is double-edged after 7.♔g5, to which Black's simplest response would be 7...h6!? 8.♔h4 ♔c7 – see 6.♔g5.

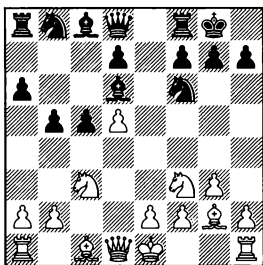


7...♔e8

The move 7...a6?! scarcely deserves serious attention; White can play 8.♔g2 (after 8.a4, Black has the interesting possibility of 8...♞e7!?, intending to counter the seemingly attractive move 9.

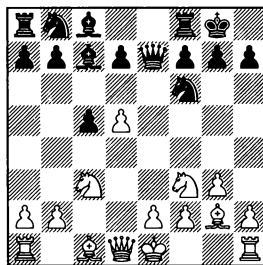
Chapter 3

♙g2 with 9...♙c7 10.0-0 d6 with a complicated and approximately equal position, while after 9.♘h4 ♙e5!? 10.♘f5? fails to 10...♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♖e4-+) and he is not afraid of 8...b5, since Black's queenside is not well enough developed and such premature activity should come to a bad end.



After 9.0-0 White retains a great positional advantage, thanks to his lead in development, for example: 9...♙e8 (9...b4?! 10.♘a4 ♙b7 11.♙g5±, or 11.♘h4±; 9...♙b7?! 10.e4! b4 11.e5 ♙xe5 12.♘xe5 bxc3 13.bxc3±) 10.e4!? (White can also play the quieter move 10.♙e1±) 10...b4 (10...♘xe4? 11.♘xe4 ♙xe4 12.♘g5 ♙e7 13.♖c2 g6 19.♘e4±) 11.♘a4 ♙xe4 (the other possible capture 11...♘xe4?! 12.♙e1 fails to solve Black's problems after 12...♙b7 13.♖d3 f5 14.♘g5± or 12...♙f8, since White will then have the pleasant choice between 13.♖d3± and 13.♙xe4!? ♙xe4 14.♘g5 ♙e5 15.♖h5±) 12.♙g5!± with a very powerful and dangerous initiative for White. It appears that Black is beyond salvation in this position.

An interesting move for Black which has not been tested in master practice yet is 7...♗e7. However, after 8.♙g2 (White could also consider 8.♘b5!?±, preserving a slight but stable edge, since it is very advantageous for him to exchange his knight for Black's dark-squared bishop) 8...♙c7

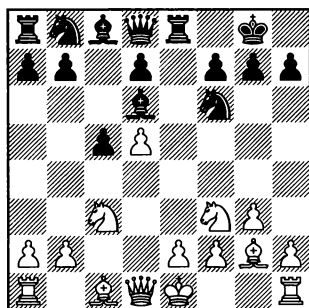


White can try to exploit his lead in development by sacrificing a pawn: 9.d6! (the idea of Black's queen move to e7 is that after 9.0-0 d6 his position is quite acceptable) and after 9...♗xd6 (the variation 9...♙xd6 10.♙g5 ♘c6 11.♘d5 ♖e6 12.♙xf6 gxf6 gives White the initiative and more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn with 13.0-0± or 13.♖d2!?± with the idea of 13...♘e7 14.♘h4!?) 10.♖xd6 ♙xd6 11.♘b5 ♘e8 12.♘xd6 ♘xd6 13.♙f4 ♘e4 14.♙c1± White has a powerful initiative and sufficient compensation for the pawn.

After 7...♙c7, White's best response would be 8.d6!? ♙a5 9.♙g2 – see 6...♙c7 7.d6!? ♙a5 8.g3!? 0-0 9.♙g2.

8.♙g2

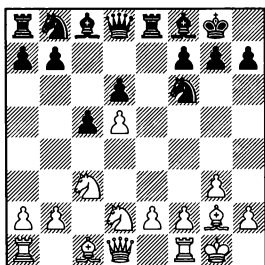
2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 ♕d6 6.♙f3



8...♗c7

This is the most popular move for Black in tournament practice.

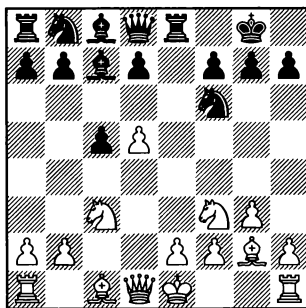
Among his other possibilities, we should devote some attention to 8...♗f8. Then, after 9.0-0 d6 10.♘d2!± (this is a standard move in such positions) White retains a stable advantage. Black's position is very passive.



This position (after 10.♘d2) is something like a worse version for Black of the well known variation of the Modern Benoni that runs 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3. d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6.♙f3 g6 7.g3 ♗g7 8.♗g2 0-0 9.0-0 ♜e8 10.♘d2!?, because in the present case the bishop on f8 is placed much more passively than in the theoretical

tabia, where it is active on the g7-square.

Black should avoid 8...a6?! in view of 9.0-0 b5 10.e4 – see 7...a6?!



9.d6!?

This move impedes the development of Black's queenside and is the only way for White to fight for an opening advantage.

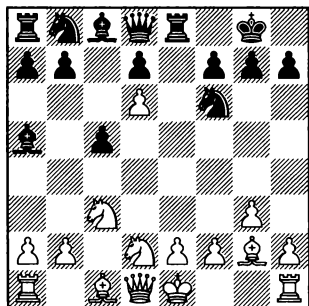
After 9.0-0 d6 Black has no problems at all. He has good counterplay on the queenside. The game Borsuk – A.Muzychuk, Mallorca 2004, continued 10.♘d2 a6 11.a4 ♘bd7 12.♘c4 (Black's game is quite easy after 12.h3 ♗b8 13.b3 b5 14.axb5 axb5 15.e4 ♘e5 16.♖c2 ♗d7 17.f4 ♘g6 18.♙h2 h5= and his prospects are at least equal, Kutskh – Legky, Odessa 2010) 12...♗b8 13.♗f4 ♘f8 14.a5 ♘g6 15.♗g5 h6 16.♗d2 ♗d7 17.h3 ♗b5= with equality.

9...♗a5

Here White has the pleasant choice between **B1) 10.♘d2** and **B2) 10.0-0**.

B1) 10. ♖d2!?

This move deserves thorough examination.



10... ♖xc3

The alternatives would not solve Black's opening problems either.

For example:

10... ♖c6 11. 0-0 ♖xc3 12. bxc3 b6 13. ♖e1 ♖a6 14. f4!? ♖e3 15. ♖f1 ♖xc3 16. ♖b2 ♖c4 17. ♖d2 ♖b4 18. ♖c3± and Black must give up the exchange, Ehlvest – Miezis, Geneva 1999;

10... ♖b6 11. ♖c4 ♖xc3+ 12. bxc3 ♖a6 13. ♖d3 ♖c6 and now with 14. ♖g5! (it is worse for White to play 14. 0-0, in view of 14... b5 15. ♖e3 ♖e5= Burmakin – Ovetchkin, Tomsk 2001) 14... b5 (14... ♖e6 15. ♖h3 b5 16. ♖xe6 fxe6 17. ♖d2±) 15. ♖e3 b4 16. ♖xf6 ♖xd3 17. exd3 gxf6 18. cxb4 cxb4 19. ♖d2± White could have reached a position with an obvious advantage.

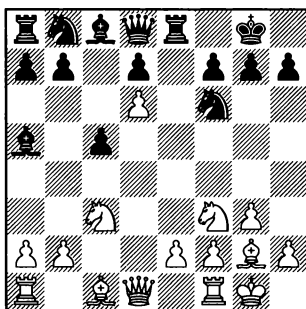
The variation 10... ♖e6 11. ♖b3!? ♖xc3+ 12. bxc3↑ leaves White with the initiative.

11. bxc3 ♖a5 12. 0-0 ♖c6

The immediate 12... ♖xc3 leads to a position with a considerable advantage to White after 13. ♖b1 ♖d4 14. ♖b2 ♖xd6 15. ♖xf6 (15. e4!?↑) 15... ♖xf6 16. ♖e4± I. Ibragimov – Miezis, Cappelle la Grande 1998.

13. ♖e1!? ♖xc3 14. ♖b1± and White has sufficient compensation for the pawn, Gattea – Miezis, Bled 2002.

B2) 10. 0-0



This is the simplest way for White to fight for an opening advantage.

10... ♖xc3

The move 10... ♖c6 leaves White's knight on the board and he has the powerful reply 11. ♖d5. White's prospects are clearly better in this position, thanks to his superior piece coordination and lead in development. The game Van Wely – Radjabov, Khanty-Mansyisk 2005, continued 11... h6 (Black must expect punishment if

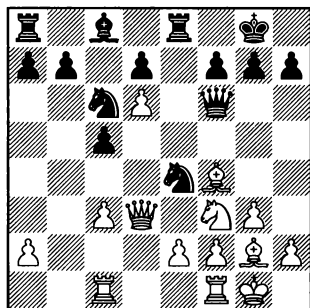
2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♖c3 exd5 5.cxd5 ♕d6 6.♗f3

he grabs the pawn: if 11...♗xd5 12.♖xd5 ♜xe2? then 13.♗g5 ♖e8 14.♖d3 g6 15.♕d5+–) 12.♗h4!? ♗xd5 13.♕xd5 b6 14.f4! ♖f6 15.e4 ♖d4+ 16.♖xd4 cxd4 17.a3↑

11.bxc3 ♗e4 12.♖d3 ♖f6 13.♕f4

It would also be interesting for White to try 13.♗d2!? ♗xc3 14.♞e1 ♗b5 15.♗b3 ♗xd6 16.♕f4 c4 17.♖xd6 ♖xd6 18.♕xd6 cxb3 19.axb3≡ with excellent compensation for the pawn thanks to his two powerful bishops.

13...♗c6 14.♞ac1±



This position can be evaluated as much better for White, for example:

14...b6

Or 14...g5? Jacimovic – Chatalbashev, Struga 2002, 15.♗d2!, with a considerable advantage for White.

15.♗h4!?

White is preparing f2-f3.

15...c4

Black frees the c5-square for his knight on e4 (White is better after 15...♖e6 16.f3 ♗f6 17.e4).

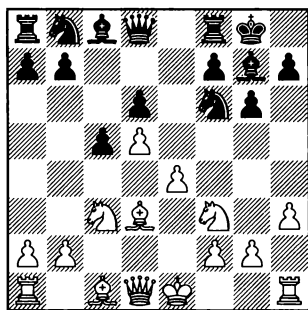
16.♖c4 ♗c5 and here, after White's correct response **17.♕e3!** (in the game Moiseenko – Gashimov, Gothenburg 2005 White played the weaker 17.♖d5?! and after 17...♜xe2∞ the position became quite unclear) **17...♕a6** (17...♖xd6 18.♗f5 ♖f6 19.♖f4 ♕a6 20.c4!?±) **18.♖g4 ♗e5 19.♖f4** (19.♖f5!?) **19...♖xf4 20.gxf4 ♗c6 21.♗f5±** White's prospects are clearly better.

Part 2. The main tabia of the Modern Benoni

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♗c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6
6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♗f3**

or

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6
6.♗c3 g6 7.h3 ♙g7 8.e4 0-0 9.♙d3**



In the previous chapters we have already seen Black's various ways to avoid the main tabia and now we have come to our basic variation for White in the Modern Benoni. Black has two main possibilities: after the active move **9...b5**, he can either enter forcing lines or else, after the inclusion of the moves **9...a6 10.a4**, opt for a position which a bit passive and requires patient manoeuvring, in view of his permanent lack of space.

First we shall deal with some rarely played alternatives for Black: **9...b6**, **9...♙d7**, **9...♗a6** (Chapter 4) and then the relative-

ly more popular line: **9...♙e8 10.0-0 c4**. Here White can choose between two methods which both offer him chances of fighting for the advantage: **11.♙xc4** (Chapter 5) and **11.♙c2** (Chapter 6).

If Black opts for the positions of a more strategic nature after **9...a6 10.a4**, then he must acquiesce to the fact that he will somehow have to counter White's stable long-term space advantage following the main continuation **10...♗bd7** (Chapter 8), or the seldom played moves **A) 10...h6**, **B) 10...♖c7**, **C) 10...♗h5**, **D) 10...♗fd7**, **E) 10...♙e8** (Chapter 7).

I have paid special attention to the analysis of the sharp forcing lines arising after **9...b5** and have dealt in detail with both possibilities for White to capture on b5: with the bishop (**10.♙xb5**) or the knight (**10.♗xb5**).

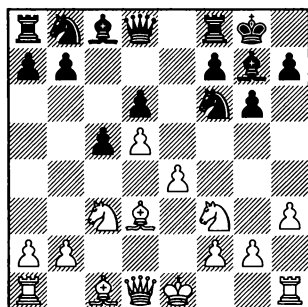
I should mention right away

that after **10.♟xb5** (Chapters 9-11), it is more difficult for White to fight for the advantage in comparison with **10.♞xb5**, but the positions arising are quite safe for him. White does not risk anything and it is either a win or a draw for him. You can thus see why some stronger players, playing the Modern Benoni for Black against a weaker opponent, quite often avoid the principled move **9...b5** (possibly because of **10.♟xb5**) and prefer **9...a6**, with the idea of outplaying their less experienced adversary in a long manoeuvring game.

After **9...b5 10.♞xb5**, Black has two possibilities: to regain his pawn immediately with **10...♞xe4** (Chapter 12), or to increase the pressure with **10...♞e8** and these two positions are the most fashionable in the Modern Benoni. Now it is White who must choose between two possible lines in his fight for the advantage: **11.♞d2** (Chapter 13) and **11.0-0** (Chapter 14). The game is much more complicated than after capturing with the bishop (**10.♟xb5**), but White's prospects of maintaining an advantage are much more promising.

Chapter 4

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0–0 9.♘f3



In this chapter, we shall analyse in detail: **A) 9...b6**, **B) 9...♙d7** and **C) 9...♘a6**.

In addition to these, as well as the main moves 9...♙e8, 9...a6, 9...b5, Black has sometimes tried a few other moves here.

9...♘bd7. Black derives no benefit from this move, compared with the 9...a6 10.a4 ♘bd7 variation, because owing to the permanent threat of ♘c3-b5, sooner or later he will have to play a7-a6, after which White will reply a2-a4, transposing to the 9...a6 variation. Therefore I shall only cover the most critical lines which soon or later transpose to the 9...a6 10.a4 ♘bd7 variation.

10.0–0 ♘h5 11.♙g5!? ♙f6 12.♙e3 ♙e8 13.♙e1 a6 14.a4, or 10... ♙e8 11.♙e1 ♘h5 12.♙g5 ♙f6 13.♙e3 a6 14.a4, or 13...♘e5 14.♙e2 ♘xf3+ 15.♙xf3 ♘g7 16.♙d3 a6 17.a4± – see Chapter 8, variation **E2**.

After 9...♘bd7 10.0–0, White should respond to Black's less popular moves in similar fashion to the variations covered under 9...a6 10.a4 ♘bd7, but in an even more advantageous version here, because with the pawns still on a2 and a7, in addition to all the usual problems that Black faces in these lines, he will also have to worry about the threat of ♘c3-b5.

After 9...♘h5, the only independent lines arise after 10.♙g5 (10.0–0 ♘d7 11.♙g5 – see 9... ♘bd7) 10...♙f6 (10...f6?! 11.♙e3 f5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♘g5 ♙e8 14.0–0 ♙e5 15.♘f3 ♘d7 16.♘b5 ♙b8 17.♘c7 ♙f7 18.♘e6 ♙e8 19.♘fg5+– D.Fridman – Spoelman, Netherlands 2006; 12...♙xf5 13.♙xf5 gxf5 14.0–0 f4 15.♙d2 ♘d7 16.♙e1±) 11.♙e3 ♘d7 (11...a6 12.a4 – see 9... a6 10.a4 ♘h5 11.♙g5 ♙f6 12.♙e3)

2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♖c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♗d3 ♗g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♕f3

12.♗e2. This move has not yet been tested in this position, but with the inclusion of the moves a7-a6 and a2-a4 (see chapter 7, variation C), it seems very reasonable. 12...♞e8 13.♕d2 ♕g7 14. 0-0± and in the arising position, in view of White's space advantage and the passive position of Black's knight on g7, White maintains a stable positional advantage.

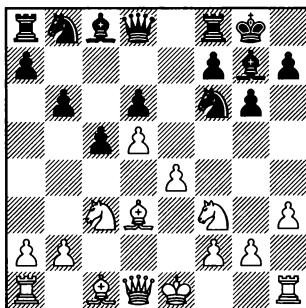
9...♞c7. The idea of this move is to advance c5-c4. In general, in such positions the early development of Black's queen to the c7-square reduces his own dynamic possibilities and seems too simplistic. 10.0-0 c4 (10...a6 11.a4 c4 12.♗e2 – see Chapter 7, variation B) 11.♗e2. This move is more logical than 11.♗c2, since White keeps the enemy c4-pawn under attack. He is threatening the manoeuvre ♗e3, followed by ♕d2, winning this pawn. 11...♕bd7 (after 11...♞e8 12.♞c2 ♕bd7 13.♗e3!, intending ♕d2, Black again has very serious problems.) 12.♗e3!? (threatening ♕d2xc4±). Now Black has nothing better than 12...a6 13.a4↑, transposing to positions from Chapter 7, variation B, in which White maintains a positional advantage and the initiative.

A) 9...b6

White has a space advantage, so the exchange of the light-squared bishops with ♗c8-a6

should be in Black's favour from the theoretical point of view.

In general, as you will see in many of the variations we analyse in the 9.♕f3 system without Black's move b5, Black's main problem is the development of his queenside pieces, particularly his light-squared bishop on c8. However, attempting to solve this problem in such a straightforward way does not work well. It seems too slow and White is able to establish a huge lead in development and exert powerful pressure in the centre.



10.0-0?

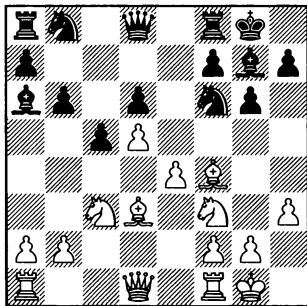
White should not try to prevent the manoeuvre ♗c8-a6 by playing 10.♞e2, because his queen is uncomfortable on this square and after 10...♞e8!? 11.0-0 a6 12.a4 ♗b7 (with the idea of ♕xd5) 13.♞c2 ♕bd7 14.♗f4 ♞c7, Black's position is quite acceptable. Although it is slightly more pleasant for White, he does not have any serious advantage.

10...♗a6 11.♗f4!

This move impedes the devel-

Chapter 4

opment of Black's knight on b8 (since 11...♙xd3 12.♖xd3 ♘bd7 fails to 13.♙xd6+–), prepares the central pawn break e4-e5 and maintains a considerable positional advantage for White.



11...♙xd3

With a black bishop on a6 the move 11...c4 looks anti-positional and after 12.♙c2 b5 13.a3 White's great positional advantage is quite evident.

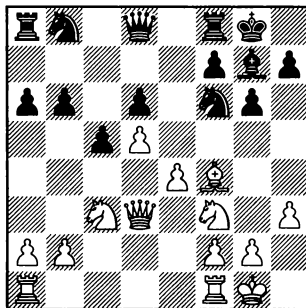
It is no better for Black to play 11...b5; the game Va.Shishkin – E.Matorin, Kiev 2007, continued 12.♖e1 (it is also interesting for White to play 12.♙xb5!? ♘xe4 13.♖e2 f5 14.♖ae1†; 13...♖e8?! 14.♙xe4 ♙xb5 15.♖xb5 ♖xe4 16.♖ae1±; 12...♙xb5?! 13.♙xb5 ♘xe4 14.♖e2†) 12...b4 13.♙xa6 (13.♘b5!?†) 13...♘xa6 14.♘b5 ♘e8 15.e5 with a great positional advantage.

It would be too passive for Black to play 11...♘e8, since after 12.♙xa6 ♘xa6 13.♖e1 f6 14.a3±

White's considerable positional advantage is unquestionable, B.Lalic – M.Mrda, Porto San Giorgio 2004.

The variation 11...♖e8 12.♖e1 does not change the character of the position, because after 12...♙xd3 (12...♘h5 13.♙h2 ♙h6 14.e5 dxe5 15.♘xe5 ♙xd3 16.♖xd3 ♘d7 17.♘c6± Van Herman – Guth, Berlin 1997) 13.♖xd3 a6 14.a4±, White maintains a considerable positional edge. In the game Y. Smit – De Long, Netherlands 1994, there followed later 14...♘h5 (it is no better for Black to play 14...♖a7, since after 15.♙h2!? it is difficult for him to find a useful move, for instance after 15...♖ae7 16.♘d2, intending ♘c4, White has a clear advantage; also good for White is 15.♖ad1!?±) 15.♙h2 ♙h6 16.e5 dxe5 17.♘xe5 ♘d7 18.d6 ♙f4 19.♘c6 ♙xh2+ 20.♙xh2 ♖g5 21.g3± with a great advantage to White.

12.♖xd3 a6



13.a4

2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♟c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♞d3 ♞g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♟f3

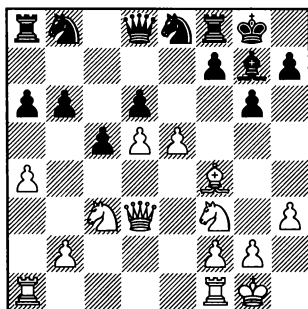
This is the simplest and the most popular way for White to fight for the advantage – he hinders his opponent's counterplay, which is based on the pawn advance b6-b5. However, White's pressure in the centre is already so powerful that he can even ignore this threat, for example: 13. ♟fe1!? intending after 13...b5 to break in the centre with 14.e5!?, maintaining considerably the better prospects after 14...dxe5 15. ♟xe5±, or 14...c4 15. ♟d2 dxe5 (15...b4?! 16.exf6 bxc3 17. ♟xc3 ♟xf6 18. ♟xc4±) 16. ♟xe5±

13...♟e8

13...♟e8 14.♟ae1↑ – see 11... ♟e8.

13...♟a7 14.♟fe1± (with the idea e4-e5 and ♟ad1) with an overwhelming advantage for White.

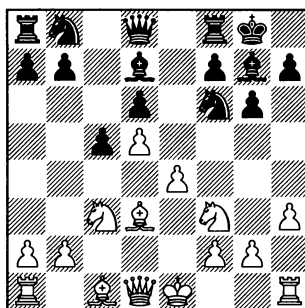
14.e5



This breakthrough in the centre is quite standard for similar positions. White has the initiative

and a considerable edge. 14...dxe5 15.♟xe5 ♟d6?! (15...♞xe5 16.♞xe5 ♟c6 17.♞f4 ♟b4 18.♟d2 ♟d6 19.♟fe1↑; 15...♟d7?! 16.♟c6 ♟h4 17.♞g3+– L.Seres – Suetin, Bern 1999) 16.♟fe1 ♟f5 17.♟ad1± with an overwhelming positional advantage, Krasenkow – Lovkov, Warsaw 2010.

B) 9...♞d7



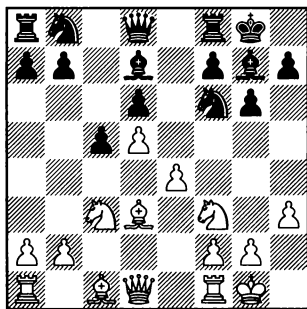
The idea of this move is quite obvious. After 10.0–0, Black plans to make the thematic advance b5, while after 10.a4, White weakens the b4-square and Black may respond with 10...♟e8 11.0–0 c4 12.♞c2 ♟a6, or 10...♟a6, reaching after 11.0–0, a position from the variation 9.♟f3 ♟a6 10.0–0 ♞d7 under somewhat better circumstances, because then, White would have the powerful resource – 11.♞f4!±, while in the present case he has played the modest move 11.a4. However, tournament practice has shown that White maintains a slight positional edge in this position as well.

Chapter 4

The move 9...♗d7 is not very popular and looks a bit awkward. Later, Black will be forced to develop his knight on b8 to a6, whereas the best place for it, in such pawn structures, is the d7-square, controlling the e5-outpost. In addition, the bishop is not very well placed on d7, owing to the permanent threat of the central pawn break e4-e5.

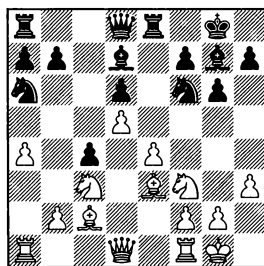
The variation with 9...♗a6 seems better than 9...♗d7, since it leads to more complicated positions, which is very important for Black from the practical point of view. However, from the theoretical point of view, this set-up is not very reliable.

10.0-0!?



This is a modern move. White allows 10...b5, but the ensuing positions are complicated and White has good chances of achieving an opening advantage, thanks to his better piece coordination. He must play very precisely though, since the struggle is quite complex.

White can aim for a slight opening edge with the less risky move 10.a4, preventing Black's counterplay based on the thematic pawn move b7-b5. After 10...♙e8 (10...♗a6 11.0-0 ♗b4 12.♙c4±; 11...♙e8 12.♙e1 ♗b4 13.♙c4±) 11.0-0 c4 12.♙c2 ♗a6 13.♙e3



we reach a position, well-known to contemporary theory, in which White retains a slight but stable positional edge.

13...♙c8 14.a5±

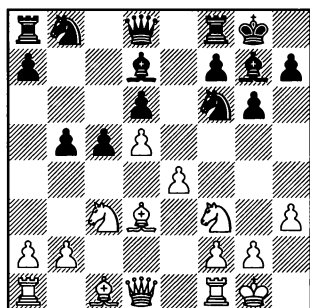
13...♗b4 14.♙b1 ♙a5 15.♙d2!±

13...b6 14.♗d2 ♙c8 15.♙e2 ♗b4 16.♙b1 ♙c7±

13...♙a5 14.♗d2 ♙ec8 15.♙b1 (also good for White is 15.♙e2 ♗b4 16.♙b1 ♙a6 17.♙a3± Kakageldyev – Moldovan, Romania 1994) 15...♗b4 16.♙d1 ♗d3 (16...♙c7?! 17.♗b5! ♙xb5 18.axb5 ♙xb5 19.♙a4 ♙a6 20.♙c6+–) 17. ♗xc4 ♙xc4 18.♙xd3 ♙ac8 19.♙f3± Black is a pawn down with insufficient compensation, Lputian – Dumitrache, Cappelle la Grande 1991.

10...b5

2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♖c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♗f3



11.a3!?

This is a key move in White's fight for an opening advantage and it fortifies the position of his knight on the c3-square. He need not fear 11...b4?! in view of 12. axb4 cxb4 13.♖a4± with an obvious positional advantage for White.

White's chances of maintaining an edge are minimal after 11. ♖xb5, for example: 11...♖xe4 12.♖a3 (12.♖xa7?! ♖xf2! 13.♙xf2 ♙xa7±; 12.♙e1 ♖xf2 13.♖xf2 c4 14.♙xc4 ♙xb5 15.♙xb5 ♙b6+ 16. ♙e3 ♙xb5= D.Muse – S.Brynell, Berlin 1998) 12...♙e8 13.♙e1 (13. ♙b3!?) 13...♖f6 14.♙xe8+ ♙xe8! with an approximately equal position, Golubev – Shabalov, Biel 1992.

11...♙e8

For 11...c4 12.♙c2 ♖a6 13.♙e1 ♙e8 – see 11...♙e8.

11...♖a6 12.♙e1 c4 13.♙c2 ♖c5 (13...♙e8 – see 11...♙e8) 14.♙f4!? ♙b6 15.e5! dxe5 16.♖xe5 ♙ad8 17.♙f3↑ a5?! 18.♙e3± ♙c8?! 19. ♖e4+- W.Browne – D.Gurevich,

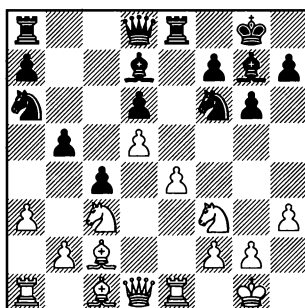
Philadelphia 1993.

12.♙e1 c4

If 12...a5 White's position is considerably better after either 13.♙f4↑ with the idea of 13...♙b6?! 14.♖xb5 ♙xb5 15.♙b3± or 13. ♖xb5 ♙xb5 (13...♖xe4 14.a4±) 14. ♙xb5 ♙xe4 15.♙xe4 ♖xe4 16.♙e2↑ and now it is bad for Black to play 16...f5?! in view of 17.♖g5±, with the idea of 17...♖xg5 18.♙xg5 ♙xg5 19.♙e6+-

13.♙c2 ♖a6

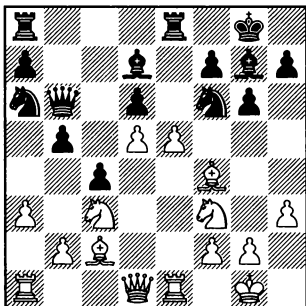
After 13...a5 14.♙f4 ♙b6 or 14...♙a6, the possible breakthrough in the centre with 15. e5!↑ provides White with a clear positional advantage.



14.♙f4

White also has the initiative after 14.♙e3 ♙c7 15.♙d4!↑, when the game F.Levin – Custillo Gallego, Seville 1994, continued 15... ♖c5?! (15...b4 16.axb4 ♖xb4 17. ♙d2±) 16.e5 dxe5 17.♙xe5 ♙d8 18.♙d4 and White's central domination guaranteed a clear positional advantage.

14...♙b6 15.e5



This break, which is standard in such positions, retains White's initiative and gives him clearly the better prospects. The game Chatalbashev – Satyapragyan, Hastings 2008, continued 15... dxe5 16. ♖xe5 ♖c5 17. ♗f3 a5 18. d6 ♙e6 19. ♖ad1 with great positional advantage to White. Here, it would be bad for Black to play 19...b4?, in view of 20. ♖a4 ♗b5 (20... ♖xa4 21. ♙xa4+-) 21. ♖xc5 ♗xc5 22. d7! ♙ed8 23. ♗xa8 ♙xa8 24. d8♗+ ♙xd8 25. ♙xd8+ ♙f8 26. ♙h6+-

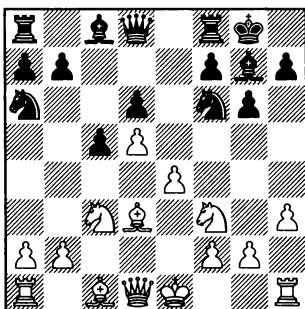
worthy continuation for Black. The knight sortie ♖b8-a6 in such pawn structures is justified only if White's pawn is on a4; for example, after 9...♙d7 10.a4 ♖a6 Black obtains a secure post for his knight on the b4-square.

In this position, however, White's pawn is still on a2, so the manoeuvre ♖a6-b4 is not at all promising for Black. The exchange of the knight on b4 for White's bishop on d3 is usually advantageous for Black, so White will first remove his bishop from d3 and then will oust the enemy knight from b4 with the move a2-a3.

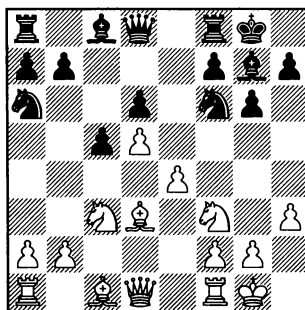
Therefore Black is more or less forced to go in for the plan with ♖a6-c7, trying to advance b7-b5. This idea is too slow however and, as we shall see later, White retains the initiative and a great advantage, thanks to his permanent threat to break in the centre with e4-e5.

10.0-0

C) 9...♖a6



This is a passive and untrust-



Black has two main alternatives in the diagram position: C1)

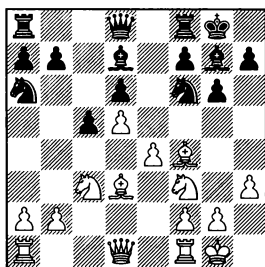
2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♟c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♞d3 ♞g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♟f3

10...♞e8 and C2) 10...♟c7.

However, before we begin the analysis of these two moves I should like to say a few words about some other rarely-played moves.

10...♟b4?! 11.♞c4!? The position arising is clearly worse for Black, since his knight is rather unstable on b4 in view of the possibility of a2-a3 and furthermore he has no promising plan of action in this position. 11...♞e8 (11...♟d7 12.a3 ♟a6 13.♞f4 ♞e7 14.♟b5 ♟e5 15.♟xe5 ♞xe5 16.♞xe5 ♞xe5 17.♞e2↑; 12...♟b6 13.♞e2 ♟a6 14.♞e1↑; 11...b6?! 12.a3 ♟a6 13.♞f4±, or 12...♞a6? 13.♟b5+–) 12.♞e1 ♟d7 13.a3 ♟a6 14.♞f4 ♟e5 15.♟xe5 ♞xe5 16.♞xe5 ♞xe5 17.f4 ♞e8 18.♞f3 f6 19.♞ad1 (19.e5!+–) 19...♞g7 20.e5!+– Rogozenko – V.Goncharov, Hungary 1995.

10...♞d7?! 11.♞f4!

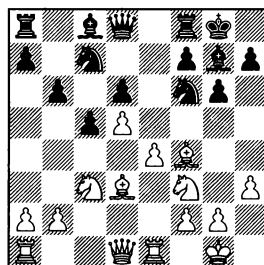


White is clearly better here, because there are too many defects in Black's position. His piece coordination is very poor, the knight on a6 and the bishop on d7

are misplaced, to say the least, his pawn on d6 is hanging and White has the permanent threat of e4-e5. 11...♞b6 (11...♞e7 12.♞e1± planning e5) 12.♞d2 (12.♟d2!? ♞xb2 13.♞c1 b5 14.♞xd6 ♞fd8 15.♟b3±) 12...♞fe8 13.♞fe1 ♟c7 14.a4 a5 15.♞c4± with a great positional advantage to White, B. Esen – Shankland, Budapest 2009.

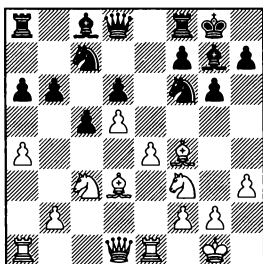
10...♞b8 – This move fails to solve Black's many serious problems. After 11.♞e1 ♟c7 12.a4 ♟d7 (for 12...a6 13.♞f1 – see variation B) 13.♞f4↑, or 12...♞e8 13.♞f4↑ White has a considerable positional advantage, thanks to Black's misplaced knight on c7.

The move 10...b6 looks very passive, since in such positions Black should be preparing the standard break b7-b5 as quickly as possible. It does not make sense for him to develop his light-squared bishop on b7, since it has little scope there, blocked by White's pawns on d5 and e4. After 11.♞e1 ♟c7 12.♞f4, White has the initiative and exerts powerful pressure.



12...♙b7 13.a4 a6 (Black has great problems after 13...♞e8 14.♜d2 ♜h5 15.♙h2↑ ♙e5 16.♙xe5 ♞xe5 17.♞f3 ♜g7 18.♞ad1± G.Dizdar – D.Kijako, Zudar 1999.) 14.♜d2 ♜h5?! 15.♙h2 ♙h6 16.♜c4 ♜e8 17.♞b3+- Zhu Chen – Kocwin, Groningen 1997.

12...a6 13.a4

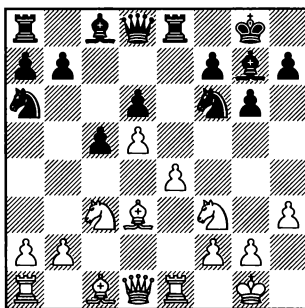


13...♞e8 14.♙h2!? (14.♞b3!?±; 14.♙c4!? threatening e5) 14...♞b8 15.e5! dxe5 (15...♜fxd5? 16.exd6 ♜xc3 17.dxc7+-) 16.♜xe5 ♙b7 17.♜c6 (17.♙c4!?+-) 17...♙xc6 18.dxc6 ♞c8 19.♙c4 ♞xe1+ 20.♞xe1 ♞d4 21.♞e2+- with a decisive advantage for White, V.Papin – Gorkavij, Voronezh 2009.

After 13...♞b8, the simplest way for him to continue the fight for an opening advantage is the move 14.♙f1!?, threatening the pawn break e4-e5, as well as the manoeuvre ♜d2-c4. Now 14...♞e8? fails to 15.e5!+-, and 14...b5?! also runs into 15.axb5 axb5 16.e5!+-, while after 14...♙b7 the waiting move 15.♙h2↑ is good for White, as is 15.♞b1 ♞e8 16.b4 ♜d7 17.♞d2±, with a considerable positional advantage, Khalifman – L.Winants, Dordrecht 1988.

C1) 10...♞e8 11.♞e1

This is a simple and strong move, retaining an enduring positional edge for White.



11...♜c7

This is Black's most popular move, but it fails to solve all his problems.

However, his alternatives are no better:

11...♙d7 12.♙f4 ♞b6 13.♜d2!? ♞xb2 14.♞c1 b5 15.♜xb5!? ♜h5 (15...♜b4 16.♜c4 ♞xc1 17.♙xc1 ♙xb5 18.a3 ♜xd3 19.♞xd3±; 17...♜xd3? 18.♜bxd6 ♜xe1 19.♜xe8+-) 16.♙xd6 ♙xb5 17.♞b1±

It is more or less the same after

11...♜b4?! 12.♙c4 ♜d7 13.a3 ♜a6 14.♙f4±, or

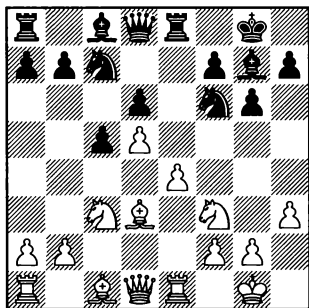
11...♞c7?! 12.♙c4± with the plan of ♙f4, preparing the pawn break e4-e5.

11...♞b8 12.♙f4 ♜c7 13.a4 a6 14.♙f1± Avrukh – Uritzky, Ramat Aviv 1998. Now, it is bad for Black to try to play actively with 14...b5!-, because White can play the

2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♘f3

standard central pawn break in such positions 15.e5!, with an overwhelming advantage.

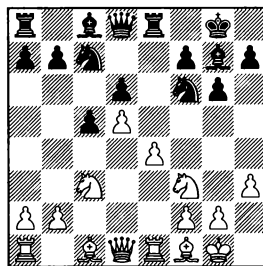
11...♘d7 12.♙f4 ♖e7 (12...♘e5 13.♘xe5 ♙xe5 14.♙xe5 ♗xe5 15.f4 ♗e7 16.e5± Kasparov – Vazquez Cruz, Mexico 2010) 13.♙b5!?± S.Kalygin – N.Zambor, Pardubice 1998 and here, after 13...♘c7?! it is very good for White to continue with the standard blow 14.e5!+–, while after 13...f6 14.♘d2, he maintains a considerable positional advantage.



12.a4

This is White's most principled and popular move in his fight for an opening advantage. He radically prevents Black's thematic advance b7-b5, which would have been possible after 12.♙f4 b5!?, leading to a complicated and very unclear position.

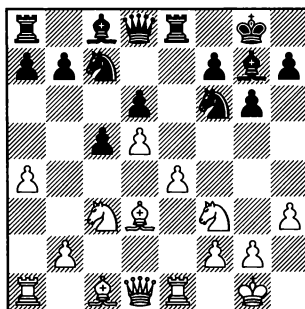
It is also interesting for White play the so far untested move 12.♙f1!?, with the idea of not weakening the b4-square. After that Black has definite problems finding useful moves and a reasonable and logical plan.



For example, after 12...a6 13.a4 ♖b8 14.♙f4±, White consolidates his positional advantage and threatens to accomplish the central pawn break e4-e5.

After 12...♘d7 13.♙f4, White again has a clear positional advantage. After the seemingly attractive move 13...♘e5 (the inclusion of 13...a6 14.a4↑ changes little) White can play 14.♘xe5 ♙xe5 15.♙xe5 ♗xe5 16.f4↑ planning to play e4-e5.

The immediate 12...b5 leads, after the more or less forced sequence 13.e5!? dxex5 14.d6 ♘e6 15.♙xb5± to an obvious advantage for White.



12...b6

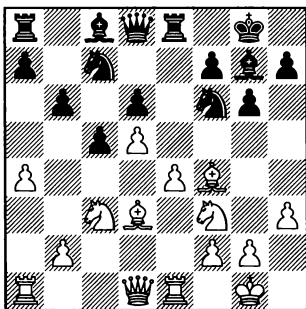
12...a6 13.♙f4 ♖b8 14.♙f1!?±

Chapter 4

It would be too slow for Black to play 12...♖a6 13.♙f4 ♘b4 14.♙b5 ♙d7 15.♙c4± P.Varga – Ivanka-Budinsky, Hungary 1991.

12...♘d7 13.♙f4↑ ♗e7 14.♗d2 f6 15.♘b1!? (with the plan of ♘a3-c4) 15...♙e5 16.♘xe5 fxe5 17.♙e3 ♗f8 18.♘a3 ♙e8 19.♘c4 b6 20. b4↑ and White has an obvious space advantage and is exerting powerful pressure on the queenside, L.Chiong – H.Unding, Greenhilts 1996. The position resembles certain structures from the King's Indian Defence, but in a version that is quite advantageous for White. He has excellent play on the queenside, while Black has no counterplay on the kingside and so instead of the usual attacking race he must stick to the tedious task of defending his queenside.

13.♙f4



13...♙b7

13...a6 14.♗b3±

13...♙a6 14.♙h2↑ Black's position is passive and prospectless;

his knight on c7 is misplaced.

14.♘d2

Here this standard manoeuvre is the simplest way for White to fight for an opening advantage.

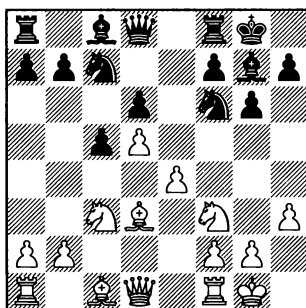
White is also better after 14.♙c4!?, or 14.♗d2.

14...♘h5 15.♙h2 ♗e7

Or 15...♙e5 16.♙xe5 ♗xe5 17. ♗f3 ♘g7 18.♗ad1± (with the plan of ♘c4 and ♗g3) and White gained a great advantage in the game G.Dizdar – Kijako, Zadar 1999.

16.a5± – White is better and has the initiative.

C2) 10...♘c7



11.♗e1!?

White delays the decision about the deployment of his dark-squared bishop.

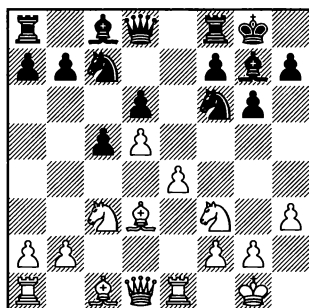
He also has an edge after 11. ♙f4, or 11.♙g5.

(diagram)

11...a6

For 11...♗e8 12.a4 – see variation C1.

2...c5 3.d5 e6 4.♖c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♗d3 ♗g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♜f3



11...♞b8 12.a4 a6 13.♙f1 – see 11...a6.

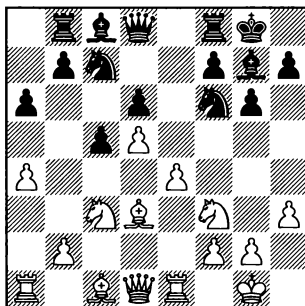
11...b6 12.♙f4 ♗b7 (12...a6 13.a4 ♞b8 14.♙h2±) 13.a4↑, leads to a position totally lacking in prospects for Black, because his minor pieces on the queenside (the bishop on b7 and the knight on c7) occupy very passive positions.

After 11...♜d7 12.♙f4 ♜e7 13.♜d2, White has extra space and superior development and these provide him with a considerable positional advantage. 13...♞b8 14.a4 a6 15.♙f1 f6 (15...b5? 16.e5+–) 16.♞ab1 ♜e5 (16...b5?! 17.b4!±) 17.♜xe5 fxe5 18.♙g5 ♜e8 19.b4± with powerful pressure on the queenside, immediately forcing Black onto the defensive, Magerramov – Garrido, Nimes 1991.

12.a4 ♞b8

The lines 12...♜d7 13.♙f4 ♜e7 14.♜d2±, 12...♞e8 13.♙f4 ♞b8 14.♙f1±, or 12...b6 13.♙f4±, provide White with a considerable

and stable advantage, thanks to his extra space and superior piece coordination.



13.♙f1

White is ready to counter Black's thematic pawn advance 13...b5 with the standard central breakthrough – 14.e5!↑

13...♜d7

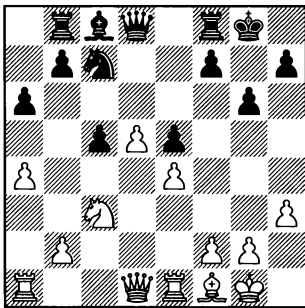
It is no improvement for Black to play 13...♞e8 14.♙f4±, or 13...b5, when in the game Krasenkow – Moskalenko, Moscow 1992, there followed: 14.e5! dxe5 15.♜xe5 ♗b7 16.d6! ♜cd5 17.axb5 ♜xc3 (17...axb5?! 18.♜xb5±) 18.bxc3 axb5 19.♙g5! h6 20.♙xf6 ♙xf6 21.♙xb5 ♙xg2 22.♜xg2 ♞xb5 23.♜d5!± and White had a great advantage owing to his dangerous passed d6-pawn and the powerful centralized position of his queen and knight.

14.♙f4 ♜e5

After 14...♜e7?, White's standard move 15.e5!+– is decisive.

15.♜xe5 ♙xe5 16.♙xe5 dxe5 (diagram)

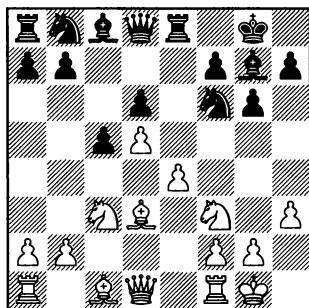
The position that has arisen is considerably better for White,



owing to the misplacement of Black's knight on c7 and the weakness of his c5-pawn. Now White's simplest way to press his advantage is the move **17. ♖b1!**? (with the plan of ♗d2 and ♜c2) exerting powerful pressure on the queenside, for example: 17...b5 18. ♗d2 ♗e8 19. b3±, or 17...♗e8 18. ♗d2 ♗d6 19. ♜c2 b6 20. ♜c3 f6 21. a5± and in both cases White maintains a great positional advantage.

Chapter 5

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0-0 9.♘f3 ♞e8 10.0-0



10...c4

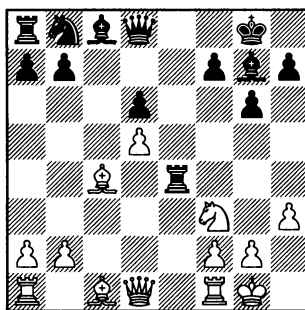
Black's idea in this variation is obvious – he wants an exchange of pawns in the centre, which has some pluses for both sides. White leads in development, while Black tries to facilitate his defence, in a rather cramped position, by exchanges.

The variations 10...♘bd7 11. ♞e1 ♘h5 12.♙g5 ♙f6 13.♙e3 and 10...♘h5 11.♙g5 ♙f6 12.♙e3 ♘d7 13.♞e1, followed later with the inclusion of the moves a7-a6 and a2-a4, transpose to lines, which we have analysed in Chapter 8.

11.♙xc4

Here we shall focus on the exchange of pawns, leaving the move 11.♙c2 until the next chapter.

11...♘xe4 12.♘xe4 ♞xe4



This is an important moment. In the diagram position White should choose between two main lines: **A) 13.♙d3** and **B) 13.♙g5**.

However, before we begin to analyse these, we should look briefly at White's alternatives.

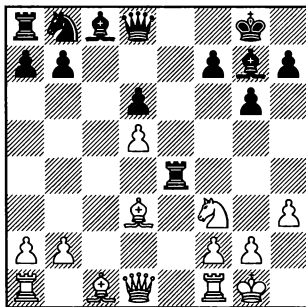
I will mention right away that the move 13.♞b3 is unsatisfactory. White's queen is not well placed on this square and, more importantly, he neglects to gain a tempo by attacking the enemy rook, which would increase his initiative. After 13...♘d7 14.♙e3, the position is rather unclear if Black then plays 14...a6!? (in tournament practice Black has tried

14...♖e5 15.♖xe5 ♗xe5, Jedynak – Denderski, Wisla 2000, but after 16.♔d3 ♜h4 17.f4 ♗g7 18.♞ae1± White has the more pleasant position; the variation 14...♗xb2!? 15.♞xb2 ♜xc4 16.♞fe1∞ enables Black to win a pawn, but considerably weakens the dark squares) 15.♔d3 ♜e8∞

It might seem logical for White to play 13.♞c2 ♜e8 14.♗g5 (14.♗e3 ♗f5 15.♞b3 ♖d7 16.♞xb7 ♖b6= Panzer – Krojanski, Dortmund 1992; 14.♗f4 ♗f5 15.♞b3 ♖a6= Bjelobrk – Sandler, Melbourne 2002). He has connected his rooks and begins an immediate struggle for the e-file. However, in this case he does not gain any real advantage, because his queen will soon have to abandon the c2-square and his bishop on c4 is not well placed in comparison with the main lines. A possible continuation is: 14...♞c7!? (the move 14...♗f6 transposes to the main lines 13.♗g5 ♗f6 14.♞c2 ♜e8; it would be acceptable for Black to continue with 14...♞b6!? 15.♞fe1 ♗d7 16.♗e3 ♞c7 17.♞ac1 b5 18.♗f1, except that he would have to acquiesce to the exchange of queens: 18...♞xc2 19.♞xc2 ♖a6∞, or 18...♞a5? Pesuto – Ayala, Colon 200, which would lead to material losses for Black: 19.♗d2! ♞d8 20.♗a5! ♞xa5 21.♞xe8+ ♗xe8 22.♞c8 ♖f8 23.♞b7+-) 15.♞fe1 (15.♞ac1 ♗f5) 15...♗d7 (it is possible to play 15...♞xe1+!? 16.♞xe1 ♗d7, but not 16...h6?? because of 17.♞e8+ ♖h7

18.♞e4 ♞d7 19.♞e7 ♞f5 20.♞h4+- Schulz – Miskevicer, Munich 2006) 16.♞xe8+ ♗xe8 and Black's position is quite acceptable.

A) 13.♔d3



This move forces Black's rook to go back to the e8-square, so that when White then attacks the enemy queen with 14.♗g5 it cannot go to the f8-square. This circumstance is no doubt advantageous for White, in comparison with variation B, which will be analysed later. However, I will mention here right away that, instead of the f8-square, Black's queen will have other good squares to flee to, such as b6 and a5.

13...♜e8 14.♗g5

Black need not fear 14.♗f4 because of 14...♖d7!. This is the simplest (14...♗xb2 15.♞b1 ♗g7 16.♖g5∞) 15.♞d2 (15.♗xd6 ♖b6) 15...♖c5 16.♞ae1 ♗d7 17.♗xd6 (17.♞xe8+ ♗xe8 18.♞c1=) 17...♖xd3 18.♞xd3 ♞b6 19.♞a3 ♗xb2± Ols-

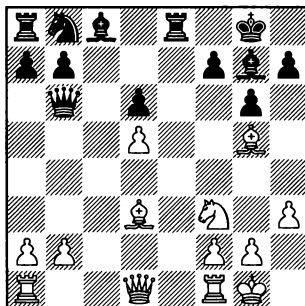
9. ♖f3 ♜e8 10. 0-0 c4 11. ♙xc4 ♜xe4 12. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 13. ♙d3 ♜e8 14. ♙g5

son – Kurnosov, Stockholm 2006.

A1) 14... ♜b6!?

White can play here 14. ♜e1, but this is not the most dangerous move for Black. He can react to it in several different ways, for example: 14... ♜e1!? (14... ♙d7!? 15. ♜xe8+ ♙xe8 16. ♙e3 ♜d7 17. ♜d2 ♜b6 18. ♙f1 ♜c8= Epishin – Lobzhanidze, Dortmund 2001; 14... ♜d7 15. ♙g5 ♜xe1+! 16. ♜xe1 ♜f6 17. ♜d2 ♙d7 18. ♜e1 ♜b6 19. ♙e3 ♜d8 20. ♙d4 ♜xd5 21. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 22. ♙xg6 hxg6 23. ♜xd5 ♙c6 24. ♜d4+ ♜f6 25. ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 26. ♜d4 ♜c8 and although the end-game looks more pleasant for White it is objectively equal, Epishin – Lezcano, Las Palmas 1997; it is weaker for Black to choose here 15... ♜f6?! 16. ♜b3± Maki – Jarvenpaa, Jyvaskyla 2008) 15. ♜xe1 ♜d7!? 16. ♙g5 ♙f6 17. ♜e3 ♜b6 (it is also possible to try 17... ♙a6!? with the idea of answering 18. ♜e1 with 18... ♙b5!, followed by the development of the bishop to the b7-square, with approximate equality) 18. ♜d2 ♙d7 (18... ♜xd5 19. ♙xg6) 19. ♜e1 ♜c8∞ and Black and has solved his opening problems.

Let us return to the move 14. ♙g5. Black's rook is on e8, so his queen cannot run to f8, but instead he can try **A1) 14... ♜b6**, or **A2) 14... ♜a5**. His other possibility 14... ♙f6 will be analysed thoroughly in variation **B5**, via the move order 13. ♙g5 ♙f6 14. ♙d3 ♜e8.



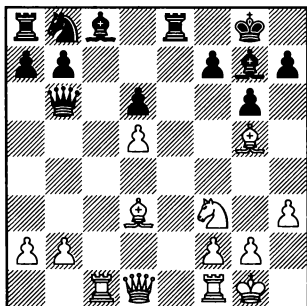
15. ♜c1

White has numerous alternatives here, but no other move allows him to maintain the advantage. 15. ♜e1 ♙d7 16. ♜xe8+ ♙xe8 17. ♜c1 (17. ♜e2 ♜d7 18. ♜e1 ♜e5= Pardo – Watanabe, Santiago 1990) 17... ♜d7 18. b3 ♜e5 (it is even more precise for Black to play 18... ♜a5!?) 19. ♙e2 ♜xf3+ 20. ♙xf3 ♙d4 21. ♜d2 ♙d7= Epishin – Haist, Baden-Baden 1990.

The transfer of White's queen to the kingside does not bring him any advantage either: 15. ♜a4 ♙d7 16. ♜f4 (16. ♜h4 ♙b5!=) 16... ♜a6 17. ♙xa6 bxa6 18. ♙f6= with approximate equality, Kozul – Velimirovic, Kladovo 1990.

The pawn sacrifice 15. ♜d2 ♜xb2 does not promise any edge for White (with 15... ♜d4!? 16. ♜e4 ♜xd5 17. ♙c2 ♜xd1 18. ♜axd1 ♜c6 19. ♜xd6 ♜e2 20. ♜fe1 ♜xe1+ 21. ♜xe1 ♙e6= Black also maintains

equality) 16.♖c1 ♜e5! (16...♙d7? 17.♜c4 ♜xa2, Baumegger – Balinov, Tweng 2007, 18.♜f3+-) 17.♖e1 ♜xe1+ 18.♜xe1 ♞xe1+ 19.♞xe1 ♙d7 20.♜e4 ♜a6 21.♜xd6 ♜c5=



15...♜d7

It is worse for Black to play 15...♙d7?! in view of 16.♜d2! (after 16.b3 ♜a6 17.♜d2 ♜b4= Black manages to make up his lag in development, Almeida Quintana – Lapshun, Barcelona 2006).

16.♜a4 h6! 17.♙h4

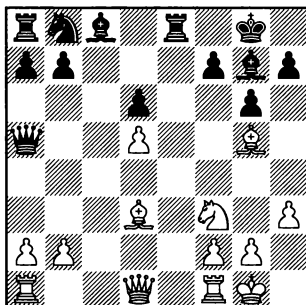
After the alternative retreat – 17.♙d2 ♜f6, Black manages to avoid weakening his kingside.

17...g5 18.♙g3

It will not be easy for White to exploit the slight weakening of Black's kingside after 18...♞d8 or 18...♜f6 19.♜d2 ♙d7 20.♜d1 ♙b5=

A2) 14...♜a5!

This is Black's most precise move.



15.♞e1

Black need not be afraid of 15.♜b3 in view of 15...♜d7 (it is possible for Black to play 15...♜a6 16.♜b5 ♜xb5 17.♙xb5 ♞e4 18.♞ae1 and here, after 18...f5, White has the recourse 19.♙e7, but after 18...♙f5! 19.g4 ♞xe1 20.♞xe1 ♙c2= he has no advantage at all) 16.♞fe1 (16.♙d2 ♜d8) 16...♞xe1+ 17.♞xe1 ♜e5=

15...♙d7!

This is Black's only move but it is good enough. He wants to complete his development with ♜a6. It appears that White cannot gain any advantage in this variation.

I will mention that it is bad for Black to play 15...♞xe1+?!, in view of 16.♜xe1 ♜xe1+ 17.♞xe1 ♙d7 18.♙f4 ♙f8 19.♜g5±

16.♞xe8+

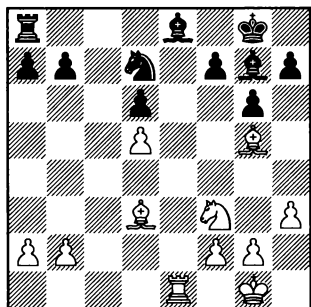
Black has no problems after 16.♜b3 ♜a6! 17.♙d2 ♜a4=, or 17...♜b6!?=

16...♙xe8 17.♜e1

Black's position is quite acceptable following 17.♜b3 ♜b6 18.♜xb6 (18.♞e1 ♜d7=) 18...axb6 19.♙f4 ♜d7 20.♙xd6 ♙xb2 21.♞e1 ♜f6 22.♙c4 ♙a4=

9. ♖f3 ♜e8 10. 0-0 c4 11. ♙xc4 ♜xe4 12. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 13. ♙g5

17... ♙xe1+ 18. ♜xe1 ♜d7



19. ♙f4

In practice White has tried 19. ♙b5 ♜f6= Ribli – Gschnitzer, Germany 1990/91.

After 19. ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 20. ♙b5 ♙xb2 21. ♙xd7 ♜e4∞, Black's position is not inferior.

19... ♙f8

Here 19... ♜b6 is also playable.

20. ♜d2 ♜f6 21. ♜e4 ♜xd5

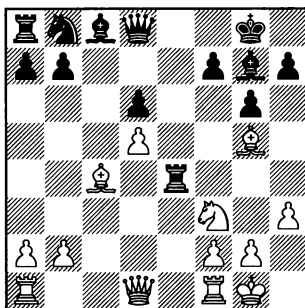
22. ♙xd6 ♙c6= Notkin – Totsky, Moscow 1995.

We can conclude that the move 13. ♙d3 does not promise White any advantage.

B) 13. ♙g5!

I believe this is the best move.

I should make it clear that White's structure is definitely not better. However, he has more space and leads in development, so he must play very actively in order to fight for the advantage. If he delays even a little, Black will equalize.



We shall analyse five possibilities for Black: **B1) 13... ♙b6**, **B2) 13... ♙a5**, **B3) 13... ♜f6**, **B4) 13... ♙f8** and **B5) 13... ♙f6**.

B1) 13... ♙b6?!

He is playing analogously to variation A1.

14. ♜d2!

This is a multi-purpose move. White protects his bishop with tempo and what is even more important, he is eyeing the e4- and c4- squares, from where his knight would exert strong pressure against Black's position.

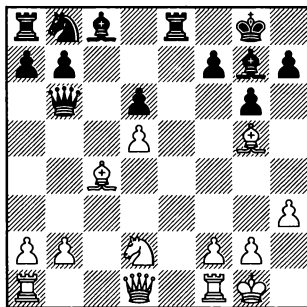
This is stronger than the immediate 14. ♜e1 ♜xe1+ 15. ♙xe1 ♙d7= S.Ivanov – Totsky, Kstovo 1994.

14... ♜e8

Black has an interesting alternative here – 14... ♜e5 15. ♙f4 ♜f5!? (15... ♜e8 16. ♜e1↑), but we have to admit that this manoeuvre seems a bit artificial. Objectively speaking, White's position should be better, for example after 16. ♙e3!? (16. ♙g3!? ♜d7 17. ♜e4) 16... ♙xb2

Chapter 5

(16...♖d8 17.f4↑) 17.♖b1 ♖f6 18.f4♙. He cannot profit immediately from the pawn-sacrifice, but Black's defence will long and difficult. White's compensation for the pawn is clearly more than sufficient.



15.♞e1

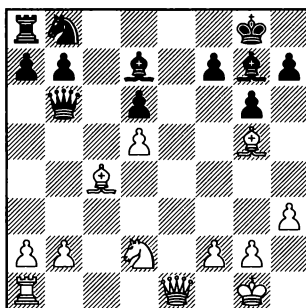
White should first contest the e-file and only then attend to his knight.

It is weaker for White to play immediately 15.♖b3 ♖f5 16.♗c4 ♖a6 17.g4 b5! 18.♗xd6 ♖xd6 19.gxf5 ♖xb2∞ Kaufman – Brownstein, Fredericksburg 1999.

15...♞xe1+

15...♗d7?! 16.♗e4! ♗a6 (if 16...♗f8 White has many routes to victory, but the strongest seems to be 17.♖f3 and then ♗f6, or ♖f6; 16...♖xb2 17.♖b1 ♖d4 18.♖xd4 ♗xd4 19.♗xd6+– Akkuzov – Brokko Olde, Serpukhov 2004) 17.♗xa6 (17.♗f6+ ♖xf6 18.♖xf6±) 17...bxa6 18.♗f6+ ♖xf6 19.♖xf6. Black's position is very bad, since his dark squares are terribly weak.

16.♖xe1 ♗d7



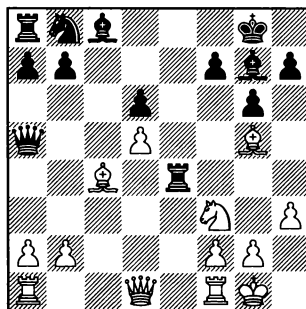
17.♗b3!

White frees the c4-square for his knight.

It is less clear to play 17.♗e4 ♖xb2 18.♗d1 ♖e5!? (18...♗a4?? 19.♖a5!+– Junge – Gschnitzer, Bad Woerishofen 1991) 19.f4 ♖b2 20.♗h2 ♗a6 21.♗xd6 ♖xh3 22.♗xh3 ♖a3+.

17...♗a6 18.♗c4 ♖c7 19.♖e7±. Black is cannot protect his d6-pawn.

B2) 13...♖a5?!



In contrast to variation **A2**, this move, does not work here.

14.♞e1!

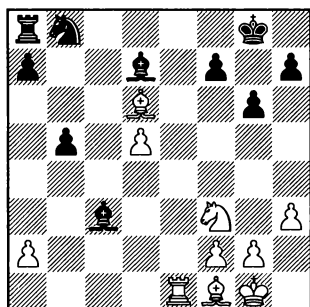
This is White's best.

9. ♖f3 ♜e8 10. 0-0 c4 11. ♙xc4 ♜xe4 12. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 13. ♙g5

Another good continuation is 14. ♜d2!? ♜e8 (14... ♜e5 15. ♙f4±) 15. ♜e1 ♙d7 16. ♜e4 ♜b4 (16... ♜a6 17. ♜xd6 ♜xe1 18. ♜xe1 ♜xe1+ 19. ♜xe1 ♜c5 20. b4+- Fedorowicz – Potter, Virginia Beach 2004) 17. ♜b3± 14... ♜xe1+ 15. ♜xe1 ♜xe1+ 16. ♜xe1 ♙d7 17. ♙e7 b5 18. ♙f1 ♙xb2

After 18... ♙f8 19. ♙xf8 ♜xf8 20. ♜g5 h6 21. ♜e4± Black has problems with the protection of his d6-pawn.

19. ♙xd6 ♙c3

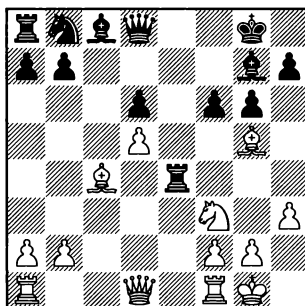


20. ♜e7!

Matters are less clear after the seemingly strong line for White 20. ♜b1 a6 21. a4 bxa4 22. ♜xb8+ ♜xb8 23. ♙xb8 ♙b5! 24. ♙d6 ♙b2 25. ♙xb5 axb5 26. ♜f1 (his extra piece would not guarantee him victory following 26. ♙c5 a3 27. ♙d4 ♙xd4 28. ♜xd4 a2 29. ♜b3 ♜f8 30. ♜f1 ♜e7) 26... a3 27. ♙xa3 ♙xa3 28. ♜d4 b4 29. ♜e2 ♜f8 30. ♜d3 ♙b2 31. ♜b5 ♙c1= Georgescu – Carmaciu, Bucharest 2008.

20... ♙f6 21. ♜e3 a5 22. ♜e5±. White has an overwhelming advantage.

B3) 13...f6



This move enables White to easily obtain an excellent position.

14. ♙d3 ♜e8

The other retreat of Black's rook is no better: 14... ♜e7 15. ♙f4 ♜a6 16. ♙xa6 bxa6 17. ♜d4 ♜e4 18. ♜c6 ♜f8 19. ♜f3 f5 20. ♜ae1± Xu Yuanyuan – Zimina, Yerevan 2000.

15. ♙f4

It is less accurate to continue with 15. ♙e3 ♜d7 16. ♜c1±, although even then White has an edge, Ribli – Acs, Hungary 2000.

15... ♜a6

15... ♜d7?! 16. ♙xd6 ♜b6 17. ♙c5 ♜xd5 18. ♙b5! ♜e4 (18... ♜xc5 19. ♙xe8 ♙xh3 20. ♜e1± S. Pedersen – Lie, Bergen 2001) 19. ♜xd5+ ♜xd5 20. ♜fe1±

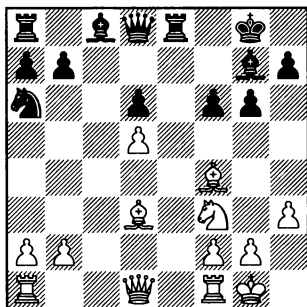
(diagram)

16. ♙xa6

Another promising line for White has not been tested in practice yet – 16. ♜d2!? ♜c5 17. ♜fe1±

16... bxa6 17. ♜d4 f5 18. ♜c6

But not 18. ♜e6 ♙xe6 19. dxe6 ♜f6 20. ♜e1 ♙xe6 21. ♜b3 ♜ae8=



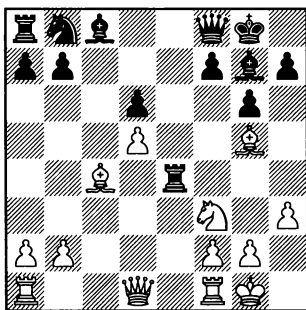
with equality, V.Belov – Chudinovskih, Moscow 2007.

18...♟f6 19.♞b1±

Although Black has the bishop pair, White's pieces are very active and his pawn-structure is superior, so he retains the advantage.

B4) 13...♟f8

Here, unlike in variation A, Black can use the f8-square for his queen.



White has two routes to advantage in the diagram position: **B4a) 14.♞c2** and **B4b) 14.♞d3**.

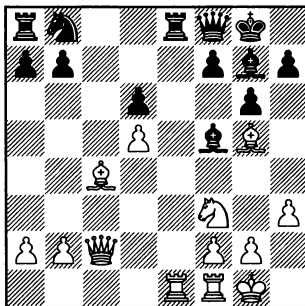
B4a) 14.♞c2!? ♞e8

It is bad for Black to play 14...

♞f5?, because of 15.♞d3.

15.♞ae1 ♞f5

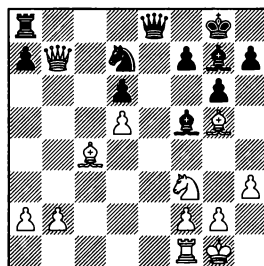
After 15...♞d7 16.♞xe8 ♟xe8 17.♞e1 ♟c8 18.♟e2 ♞a6 19.♞f4! White exerts powerful pressure against Black's queenside.



16.♟d1!N

This move has not been tested in practice yet.

I believe this is better than the move 16.♟b3, as previously played. The point is that Black does not need to bother with the protection of his b7-pawn. 16... ♞d7 17.♞xe8 ♟xe8 (it is also interesting for Black to play 17...♞xe8 18.♟xb7 ♞c5 19.♟xa7 ♞xb2 20. ♞e1 ♞e4, trying to organize counterplay at the cost of a pawn) 18. ♟xb7

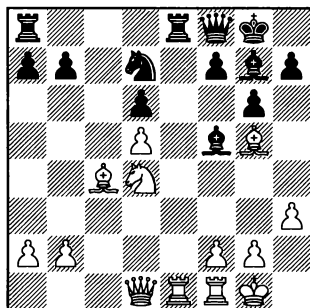


9.♟f3 ♞e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙xc4 ♜xe4 12.♜xe4 ♞xe4 13.♙g5

18...♞c8 (if 18...♜b6, White can fight for the advantage in two ways: either with 19.♞e1!? ♞b8 20.♞xb8+ ♞xb8 21.♙b3 ♙xb2 22.♙f4± Riazantsev – Bu Xiangzhi, Budapest 1999, or 19.♙b3 ♙xb2 20.♞e1 and now if 20...♞d7 21.♞a6 is good, planning 22.♞e7, while after 20...♞c8 21.♞e7 ♞d7, Piket – Ljubojevic, Monte Carlo 1994, White has the strong move 22.♞e3!) 19.♞c6 ♙xb2∞ – it would be too early to talk about an edge for White here.

The same idea behind the move 16.♞d1 can also be seen in the line 16.♞xe8 ♞xe8 (but not 16...♙xc2?! 17.♞xf8+, because now if 17...♙xf8 White can play 18.♙f4, while after 17...♙xf8 18.♞c1 ♙a4 19.♙b3± Black cannot play 19...♙xb3? because of 20.♞c8+–) 17.♞d2!? (after 17.♞b3 ♜d7 18.♞xb7 ♞c8∞ Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn).

16...♜d7 17.♜d4±



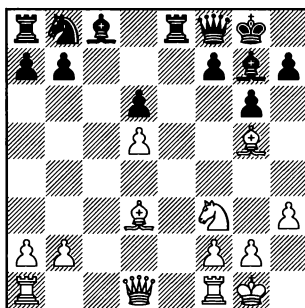
This is the point of retreating

of the queen to d1. White obtains the advantage of the bishop pair. He has clearly the better prospects.

B4b) 14.♙d3

This move also sets Black some problems.

14...♞e8



15.♞e1!

White has some other options, but they are less promising. For example, he does not achieve much with 15.♞a4 because of 15...♙d7! (15...♜d7?! 16.♞fe1 ♞xe1+ 17.♞xe1 ♜c5 18.♞c2 ♙d7 19.♙e7 ♞b8 20.♙f1±) 16.♙b5 ♙xb5 17.♞xb5 ♜a6∞ Bellon Lopez – Wedberg, Stockholm 1994.

After 15.♙b5, Black saves the day again with 15...♙d7!? (it is inferior to play 15...♜d7 in view of 16.♞c1 when after 16...a6 17.♙xd7 ♙xd7 18.♞c7 ♙b5 19.♞e1± he has problems, while after 16...h6, Pavlovic – Milanovic, Zupanja 2008, White can play 17.♙e3!? a6 18.♙xd7 ♙xd7 19.♞c7 ♙f5 20.♞xb7 ♞eb8 21.♞xb8 ♞xb8 22.b3± win-

ning a pawn, for which Black will find it difficult to gain sufficient compensation) 16.♖a4 ♗xb5 17. ♖xb5 ♖a6∞

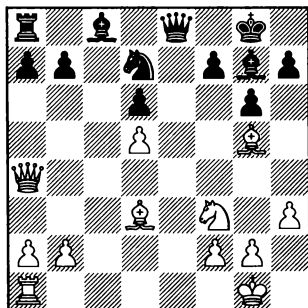
It is also possible for White to play 15.♖c1 ♖d7 16.♖c7 h6 and now 17.♗f4!?, rather than 17.♗c1, which Black can answer with 17... ♖c5!∞ (but not 17... ♖e5 18.♖xe5 ♖xe5 19.♖f3 ♖e7 20.♖c2± Anna-kov – Dejmek, Dallas 2002).

It would be interesting to try out the natural move 15.♖d2!? h6 16.♗e3 (stronger than 16.♗f4 ♖d7 17.♗b5 ♖d8 18.♖fe1 ♖f6 19.♖ac1 a6= Astrom – Hall, Hafnarfjordur 1997) 16... ♖d7 17.♖ac1 ♖c5 18. ♗b5 ♖d8 19.♖d4± and Black will have difficulties with the comple- tion of his queenside develop- ment.

15... ♖d7

After 15...h6 16.♖xe8 ♖xe8 17.♗f4 ♖d8 18.♖d2± Black had problems in the game Lukey – Sandler, Melbourne 1994.

16.♖xe8 ♖xe8 17.♖a4



17... ♖f6

After 17...♖f8 White can play the strong move 18.♖h4!

18.♖b3 h6 19.♖e1 ♖d8 20.♗f4 ♗f8

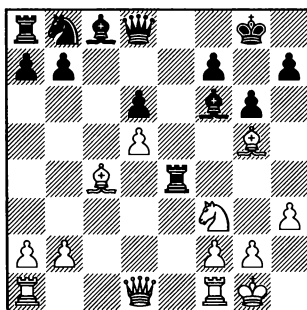
Black has problems with the development of his queenside. With his last move he prepares the transfer of his knight to the c5-square, but White has enough time to counter this.

21.♗c4 ♖d7 22.♖e3 g5 23. ♗g3 ♖b6 24.♗b3 ♖f6 25.h4± and White has an obvious advan- tage, Potkin – Pantsulaia, Aix-les- Bains 2011.

B5) 13... ♗f6

This is Black's best line. This bishop move looks natural, but it has certain drawbacks.

However, as we have already seen, his alternatives are all less principled and give White the ad- vantage.



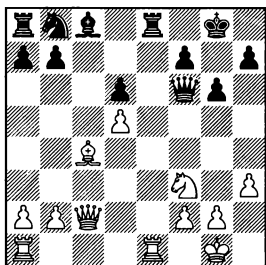
14.♗d3

White has two possible plans here. He can support his bishop on g5, with the idea that after the exchange of the bishops, his knight on g5 will exert pressure

9...♖e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙xc4 ♘xe4 12.♘xe4 ♖xe4 13.♙g5 ♙f6 14.♙d3 ♖e8

against Black's position. It can also go to the e4-square, attacking the enemy pawn on d6, as well as the f6-square. The text move is based on this plan.

His other option to insert the moves 14.♙c2 ♖e8 (14...♙f5?! 15.♙d3±) and then exchange on f6 and try to improve his position, creating the threat of penetration along the e-file. We shall analyse this plan thoroughly. 15.♙xf6 (it is weaker for White to play 15.♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 16.♖xe1, because instead of 16...♙xg5?! 17.♘xg5 ♙f5 18.♙d2± Tejkal – Vavrinc, Ricany 2006, Black can equalize with: 16...♘d7! 17.♙d2 ♙xg5 18.♘xg5 ♘f6 19.♙f4 ♘g7=) 15...♙xf6 16.♖fe1



16...♖d8. Exchanging on e1 is horrible for Black, so he must give way. It seems to me that his rook might be more useful on d8 than on f8. (After 16...♖f8 there is no benefit for White to play 17.♘d2 ♙f5 18.♙d3 ♙xd3 19.♙xd3 ♘d7 20.♘e4 ♙xb2 21.♖ab1 ♙e5= S. Ivanov – V.Moiseev, Podolsk 1992, but he can fight for the advantage with the line 17.♙b3!? ♘d7 18.♖ac1±) 17.♙b3 (but not

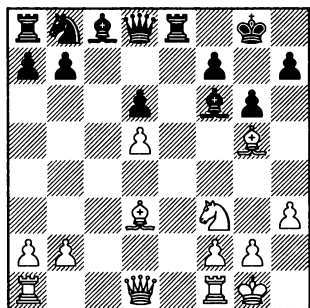
17.♘d2 ♙f5 18.♙d3 ♙xd3 19.♙xd3 ♘d7∞ Ionov – Totsky, Orel 1992; or 17.♖e3 ♘d7 18.♖ae1 ♘b6 19. b3!? ♙d7 20.♘d2 ♙f5∞; the complications after 17.♙d2!? ♙xh3!? 18.♙h6 ♙f5 19.♘g5 ♙g7 20.♙h4 ♖f8 21.g4 h6 22.♘e6 ♙xe6 23. dxe6 ♘c6 24.exf7+ ♘h7∞ are very interesting, but do not lead to any advantage for White) 17...♘d7 18.♖ac1 ♘c5!? (after 18...♖b8 19. ♙f1!? White exerts strong pressure on the open files) 19.♙a3 ♙d7 20.b4!? ♘a4 21.♘d2 ♙b2 22.♙xb2 ♘xb2 23.♙f1 (he does not achieve much with 23.♘e4 ♙f5 24.♙f1 ♙xe4 25.♖xe4 ♖ac8 26.♖xc8 ♖xc8 27.♖e7 ♖b8) 23... ♖ac8. Now, White has the strong move 24.g4!± with the idea of ♘e4. It is inferior to play the immediate 24.♘e4 because of 24... ♖xc1 (24...♙f5 25.♖xc8 ♙xc8 26. ♘f6+ ♘g7 27.♖e8!+-) 25.♖xc1 ♙f5 26.♘g3 ♙c8 27.f3=

I should also mention here the move 14.♘d2, but this does not promise White much either: 14... ♖e8 (14...♖e5!?) 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16. ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 17.♙xe1 ♘d7 and Black's position is quite acceptable (17...♙d7 18.♘e4 ♙e5 19.♘c3± Shariyazdanov – R.Popov, Tomsk 2001).

14...♖e8

Black loses after 14...♖b4?? because of 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6 16.♙e1!+- (diagram)

Now White has a choice: **B5a)** 15.♙a4 or **B5b)** 15.♙d2.

**B5a) 15.♔a4!?**

This is an interesting transfer of the queen and it seems to me that it sets Black problems.

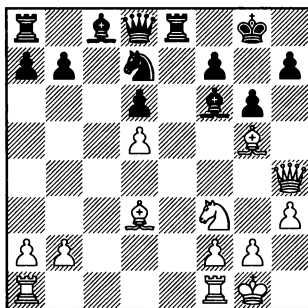
15...♘d7

It is much weaker for him to continue with 15...♙xg5 16.♘xg5 ♖e5 (after 16...♘d7, White has the move 17.♘e4 and Black's knight is immobilised because of the possible loss of the exchange) 17.f4 ♗xd5 (after 17...♖e3 18.♗ae1 ♗xe1 19.♗xe1 ♘d7 20.♙b5!± White prevents the move 20...♘f6, which would be countered with the surprising move 21.♙e8!) 18.♗c4! (18.♗ae1?! ♘c6 19.♗b3, Wells – Tockij, Harkany 1992 and here Black had to exchange queens 19...♗b6+ 20.♗xb6 axb6 21.♙c4 ♗da5 22.♗d1±, reducing White's pressure) and White wins the exchange for a pawn: after 18...♗xg5 19.fxg5 ♙e6 20.♗f4± Black's compensation is insufficient, Salgado Allaria – Musat, Bucharest 1993.

16.♗h4

(diagram)

White concentrates his operations on Black's kingside, which



will be weakened after the unavoidable exchange of the dark-squared bishops.

16...♙xg5

With the move 16...a6 Black can take the b5-square under control, planning to develop his bishop to b7. 17.♗fe1 ♗xe1+ 18.♗xe1 b5. Now, White has the strong move 19.♗e4!, which makes Black's whole plan dubious. 19...♙b7? (after Black's best continuation 19...♙xg5 20.♘xg5 ♘f8 he parries the immediate threats but his knight on f8 remains very passive: 21.♗e3 and here it is bad for Black to play 21...♗a7? in view of 22.♗d4! ♗c7 23.♘e4+–, while after 21...♙b7 22.♗f4 ♗c7 23.♗f6 ♙xd5 24.♙e4↑ White's initiative is very strong) 20.♗f4 ♘g7 21.♘d4! and White has a crushing attack, for example: 21...h5 (21...♙xd5 22.♗xf6! ♘xf6 23.♘f5+! gxf5 24.♗h6+ ♘g8 25.♙xf6+–; or 21...♙xg5 22.♗xf7+! ♘xf7 23.♗xh7+–) 22.♙xf6+ ♘xf6 23.♙xg6! ♘xg6 (Black is already beyond salvation: 23...fxg6 24.♘e6+; 23...♘xd5 24.♗xf7+ ♘xg6 25.♗g7+! ♘g7 26.♘e6+–) 24.♗f5! ♘g7 25.

9...♖e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙xc4 ♜xe4 12.♜xe4 ♖xe4 13.♙g5 ♙f6 14.♙d3 ♖e8

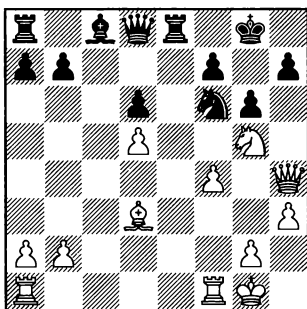
♙g5+ ♙f8 26.♙xf6 ♙e7 27.♜f5 ♙e1+ 28.♙h2 ♙e5+ 29.f4 ♙xd5 30.♙h6+- J.Horvath – C.Horvath, Bischwiller 1993.

17.♜xg5 ♜f6

After 17...♜f8, the simplest for White would be to increase the pressure with 18.♙ae1 ♖xe1 19.♖xe1 ♙d7 20.♙f4±

18.f4!

This active move looks the most attractive. With quieter continuations White will not achieve much, e.g. 18.♖fe1 ♙d7 19.♙f4 h6 20.♜f3 ♜xd5 21.♙xh6 ♙f6∞



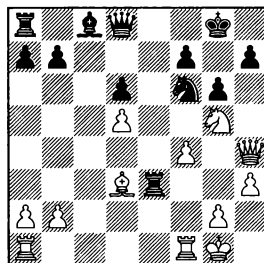
18...♜h5

This is Black's relatively best move.

After 18...♙g7 19.f5 h6 20.fxg6 hxg5 21.♙xg5 ♖e5 22.♙g3 ♙b6+ 23.♙h1 ♙e3 24.♙f3 ♙g5 25.♙xg5 (25.gxf7 ♙xg3 26.♖xg3+ ♙xf7 27.♖f1 ♙xh3 28.gxh3 ♖f8 29.♙g2±) 25...♖xg5 26.gxf7 ♜d7 27.♖e1 ♜f8 28.♖e8± despite the extra piece his position is very difficult, Gallego Jimenez – Zelcic, San Sebastian 1991. The pin along the eighth rank and the powerful passed f7-

pawn provide White with an overwhelming advantage.

If 18...♖e3, White has two very good possibilities.



The first is the line: 19.f5!? ♖xd3 (19...♜h5 20.fxg6 hxg6 21.♙f2 ♙e7 22.♙e4+- Dinstuhl – Von Hartlieb, Muenster 1993) 20.fxg6 hxg6 21.♜xf7 ♙b6+ (21...♙xf7? 22.♙h7+-) 22. ♙h1 ♙d4 (22...♜h5 23.♙e7!) 23. ♙xd4 ♖xd4 24.♖xf6±

The alternative is: 19.♜xh7 ♙g7 20.f5 ♙xf5 (20...♖xd3? 21.fxg6+- Luch – Bednarek, Warsaw 2005) 21.♖xf5 gxh5 (21...♜xh7 22.♖xf7+-) 22.♙g5+ ♙xh7 23. ♙xf5+ ♙h8 24.♙xe3 ♙b6 25.♖e1 ♜xd5 26.♙xb6 axb6 27.a3±, which it is just as convincing.

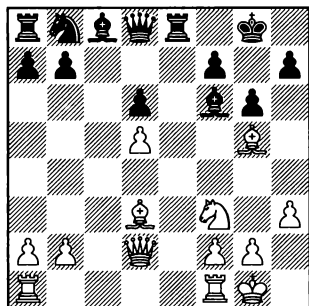
19.f5±

White has a powerful initiative.

B5b) 15.♙d2

(diagram)

Now we shall analyse: **B5b1) 15...♜d7 and B5b2) 15...♙xg5.**

**B5b1) 15...d7 16. Bae1!**

White has many other good moves here but it seems to me that he has excellent chances of exerting pressure only after the text move.

16. Wf4 is less aggressive: 16... xg5 17. d5g5 Wf6 18. Wd2 (after 18. Wh4, Black can play 18...h5 or 18...d8!?) Bles – Klovsky, Kavala 1991 and in both cases his position is quite acceptable) 18...d5 (18...b6 is also a logical move, but then White can fight for an advantage with 19. d4!↑) 19. b5 d7 20. d7d7 d7 21. Bae1! (this is an important moment, because after 21. Bfe1 Black is not forced to play 21...Wf5?! 22. g4 Wf6 23. d4 Wd8 24. Wf4± Mailliet – Barre, Fouesnant 2005; instead it is better to continue with 21...d5 22. b4 d4! =; it is because of this tactical nuance that White should play his a1-rook to e1) 21... Bxe1 22. Bxe1 Wd8 23. We3. It looks as though White has still some pressure, but he cannot turn this into anything substantial, for example: 23...d6 24. We7 Wxe7 25.

Bxe7 Bb8 26. dxf7 (26. Bxf7? d4!↑) 26...d8 27. Bc7 dxd5 28. Bd7 d6 29. Bd8+ Bxd8 30. dxd8 b6=

In practice White has tried placing his other rook on e1 – 16. Bfe1, but this is inferior because of 16...d5! 17. Bxf6 Wxf6 18. dxe5 dxe5 19. Wc3 (19. Wb4 d5 20. Bxd1 dxd3 21. Bxd3 Wb6=) 19...d5= (19...Wd6?! 20. b5 Bb7 21. Wa3± Wells – Tolnai, Balatonbereny 1992).

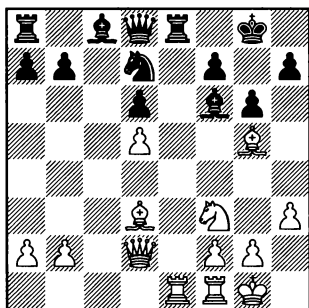
An interesting try here is 16. b5 xg5!? (it is less accurate to play 16...a6 17. d7d7 d7 18. Bfe1, since after 18...Bc8 19. Bxe8+ Bxe8 20. Bb1±, or 18...xg5 19. d5g5 h6 20. d4 d5 21. d3g3 Wg5 22. Wb4±, White retains an edge, while in the variation 18...Bxe1+ 19. Bxe1 Bc8, Fekete – Banhazi, Hungary 2004, instead of agreeing to a draw, White could have continued the fight by playing 20. Wf4, with a clear advantage) 17. d5g5 Bb5 18. d3f3 (18. f4 Bb7∞) 18...Bf5∞ and although Black's rook on f5 is placed provocatively, it is hard to see how White can exploit this. Black intends simply to complete his development with d6 and d7.

(diagram)

16...d5

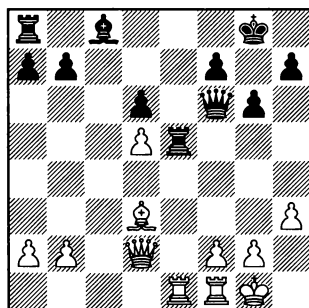
The exchange 16...xg5 17. d5g5 transposes to variation **B5b2**, but White has an interesting alternative here – 17. Bxe8+ Wxe8 18. Wg5.

9...♖e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♗xc4 ♜xe4 12.♜xe4 ♖xe4 13.♗g5 ♗f6 14.♗d3 ♖e8



17.♗xf6 ♜xf6 18.♜xe5 ♖xe5

The nuance 18...dxe5 19.f4! illustrates again why on move 16, White should place the a1-rook on e1. In this variation his other rook comes into play from the f1-square.



19.♖xe5!?

Here the only line tried so far is 19.♜c3 ♗g7 20.♖xe5 ♜xe5 21.♖c1 (21.♜xe5+?! dxe5 22.♖c1 ♗f5 23.♗xf5 gxf5= Ruspini – Lampe, Pinneberg 1997) 21...♜xc3 22.♖xc3±. This endgame looks better for White but it is difficult to extract anything tangible: 22...♖b8 23.♖c7 a6 24.f4 (24.a4!?) 24...♗f8 25.b4 b5 26.♗e4 ♗e8 27.♗f2 ♖a8 28.g4 ♗d7 29.♖c3 a5 30.♖a3 a4

31.♖c3 ♖c8 32.♖xc8+ ♗xc8 33.♗d3 ♗d7 34.g5 ♗e7 35.f5 gxf5 36.a3 f6 37.h4 ffg5 38.hxg5 ♗f7 39.♗f3 ♗g6 40.♗f4 ♗g7= draw, Petursson – Wedberg, Stockholm 1991.

19...dxe5

But not 19...♜xe5?? in view of 20.♖e1+–

20.♖e1

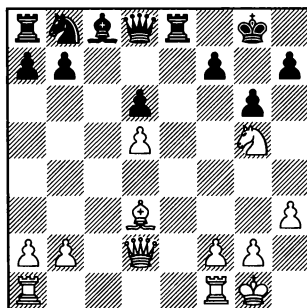
Now White exerts powerful pressure, despite the considerable reduction of material on the board.

20...♜d6

Black should avoid 20...♗f5 21.♗xf5 ♜xf5 22.♜b4 b6 23.♜e7±

21.♜c3 f6 22.f4 ♗d7 23.fxe5 fxe5 24.♖xe5 ♖c8 25.♜e1±. White has won a pawn and has excellent chances of realising it.

B5b2) 15...♗xg5 16.♜xg5

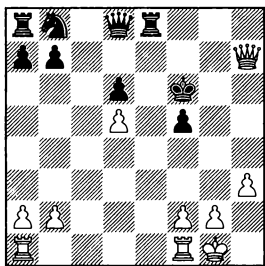


16...♜d7

It is tremendously risky for Black to try to capture the enemy d5-pawn, because his lag in devel-

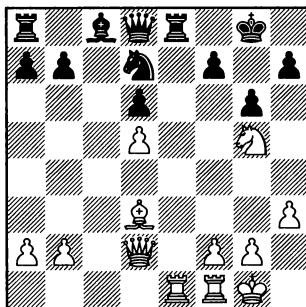
opment is considerable: 16...♖e5
17.f4 ♖xd5 18.♖e3↑

It is even worse for him to play 16...h6?, because of 17.♖xf7! (contemporary theory recommends 17.♖f3, with chances of some advantage for White, while the move 17.♖xf7 is evaluated as leading to a draw, but this is completely wrong!) 17...♗xf7 18.♖xh6 ♔f5 (after 18...♖f6 19.♖a1 ♖g8 20.♖e2 Black is helpless against the simple doubling of White's rooks: 20...♖g7 21.♖c1! ♖d7 22.♖fe1±) 19.♖h7+ ♗f6 (19...♗f8 20.♖xf5 gxf5 21.♖a1 ♖d7 22.♖e6! ♖f6 23.♖h6+ ♗f7 24.♖fe1 ♖g8 25.♖f4+–) 20.♖xf5 gxf5



White is not at all obliged to force a draw by a perpetual check; he can win by bringing his rook into play: 21.♖a1 ♖a6 (21...♖d7 22.♖e6+ ♖xe6 23.♖h6+–) 22.♖e3! with a winning attack, for example: 22...♖c5 23.♖h6+ ♗f7 24.♖g3 ♖g8 25.♖h7+ ♗f6 26.b4! (eliminating Black's control over the e6-square) 26...♖e4 27.♖h6+ ♗e5 (27...♗f7 28.♖e6+) 28.♖d1+–

17.♖a1



17...♖xe1!?

After 17...♖e5 18.♖b5 ♔d7 19.♖xd7 ♖xd7 (19...♖xd7? 20.f4 ♖c4 21.♖d4+–) 20.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 White should take note of the new move 21.♖c1!? (so far the only line tried in practice is one that loses the advantage: 21.♖e1 ♖d8! 22.♖f4 ♖f6= Bles – T.Ernst, Groningen 1991). After 21...♖c8 22.♖xc8 ♖xc8 23.♖e4± Black will have a hard task defending this position.

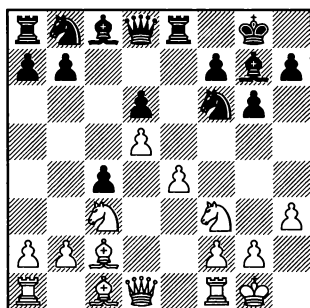
18.♖xe1 ♖f6 19.♖f4 h6
20.♖e4

White can sacrifice a piece in similar fashion to the line analysed in our note to Black's 16th move, but here it just leads to an approximately equal position: 20.♖xf7 ♗xf7 21.♖xh6 ♔f5 22.♖xf5 gxf5 23.♖e6 ♖h8 (23...♖c8? 24.♖g5±) 24.♖g5 ♖e8 25.♖xf5 ♖xe6 26.♖xe6+ ♗g6 27.♖xd6 ♖c8 and despite the fact that White has numerous extra pawns, Black's tandem of queen and knight is sufficient to balance the chances.

20...♖xe4 21.♖xe4 ♗g7 22.♖c1. Black still has some difficulties with his development – 22...♖b6 23.♖d2±

Chapter 6

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0-0 9.♘f3 ♚e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙c2



It has long been considered that this move, rather than 11. ♙xc4, is White's best try for advantage. There is no doubt that it is quite logical, since he avoids the exchange of the pawns and plans to turn the advance of his opponent's c-pawn to his benefit.

In the diagram position Black usually chooses one of the following moves: **A) 11...a6**, **B) 11...♙d7**, **C) 11...♘a6**, or **D) 11...b5**.

Another interesting try is 11... ♘bd7, but White has many promising possibilities against this. I will mention just one: 12.♙e3!? (in practice 12.♚e1!? is often played) 12...b6 13.♙d4!? (it is less convincing for White to try to clarify the situation immediately

with 13.♘d2 ♘c5 14.♙a4 ♙d7 15. ♙xc5 bxc5 16.♙xd7, since rather than 16...♚xd7 17.♚e1± Black can play 16...♘xd7!? 17.♘xc4 ♘e5±, and despite being a pawn down, he exerts pressure on the semi-open 'b' and 'e' files and along the a1-h8 diagonal, and thus has excellent chances of reaching an acceptable position) 13...♙b7 14. ♘d2± with the idea of responding to 14...♚c8 with 15.♘b5!

A) 11...a6

This move is not in the spirit of the position.

12.a4

White should not allow his opponent to advance b7-b5 without a struggle.

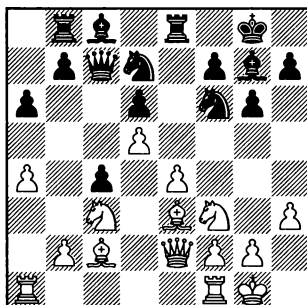
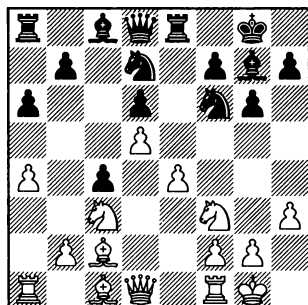
12...♘bd7

(diagram)

13.♙e3!

After this move White's position is clearly better.

His other possibility is 13. ♙f4!?, which appears to develop a piece with tempo. However, Black can protect his d6-pawn with a move that is useful in its own



right. It seems to me that in this particular case White's bishop is better placed on e3; nevertheless its development to the f4-square is also worth consideration. A possible continuation is 13...♖c7 (13...♖b6 14.♗b1!?±) 14.♘d2 (this is better than 14.♗e1 ♘h5 15.♙e3 b6 16.♗d2 ♙b7∞ Ruiz – Gutierrez Castillo, Bogota 1992.) 14...♗b8 15.a5 b5 16.axb6 ♘xb6 17.♙e3 ♘fd7 18.♗e2!? ♘c5!? 19.♘xc4 ♘xc4 20.♗xc4 ♗xb2 21.♘a4 ♗b8 22.♘xc5 ♙xa1 23.♗a4∞

13...♗c7

13...♗b8 14.♗e2 ♗c7 15.♗fd1! – see 13...♗c7.

White is obviously better after 13...b6 14.♘d2 ♗c7 15.♗e2±

14.♗e2

It is clearly inferior to play 14.♗e1 b6 15.♗d2 ♘c5 16.♙d4 ♙b7∞ Vescovi – Bruce, Sao Paulo 2003.

14...♗b8

(diagram)

15.♗fd1!

This is a very precise waiting move, which is also very useful in itself. Black has problems in finding an adequate response.

Matters are less clear if White plays 15.♗fc1 b6∞, or 15.a5 b5 16.axb6 ♘xb6 17.♘d2 ♘fd7 18.♗fc1 ♘c5∞

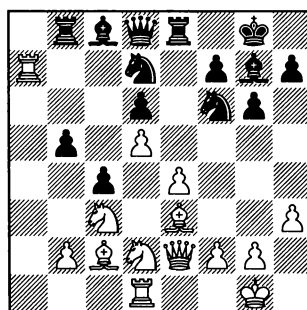
15...b6

The move 15...b5? is unplayable for Black in view of 16.axb5 axb5 17.♗a7 ♗d8 18.♘d4+–

16.♘d2

Now Black is forced to play b7–b5.

16...b5 17.axb5 axb5 18.♗a7 ♗d8



19.♘f3!

White's knight is heading for the d4-square.

19...♘c5

After 19...b4 White should complete his thematic knight ma-

9. ♖f3 ♜e8 10. 0-0 c4 11. ♙c2

noeuvre, regardless of loss of material: 20. ♖d4! ♖e5 21. ♖c6 (21. f4!?) 21... ♖xc6 22. dxc6 ♜e7 23. ♜xe7 ♞xe7 24. ♙f4 bxc3 25. ♙xd6 ♞a7 26. ♙xb8 ♞xb8 27. ♞xc4 ♞c7 (27... cxb2? 28. ♜d8+ ♙f8 29. ♞c5+–) 28. b4± with excellent winning chances.

20.e5

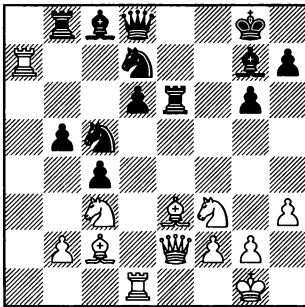
Now the usefulness of White's 15th move becomes clear.

20... ♖fd7 21.e6!

This is the most energetic move, although it is also possible to continue with 21. exd6!?

21... fxe6 22.dxe6 ♜xe6

If Black captures the other way with 22... ♖xe6, then after 23. ♖e4 his position is equally unenviable.



23. ♖xb5!

This is the point of White's idea.

23... ♞b6

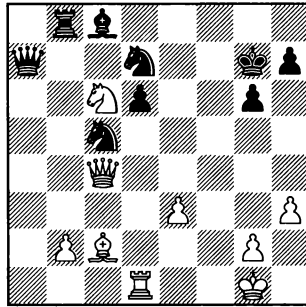
Accepting the sacrifice of the knight – 23... ♜xb5 24. ♞xc4 ♜xb2 (24... ♜b7 25. ♜xd6+–) 25. ♙xc5 ♖xc5 26. ♞xc5 ♙d7 27. ♞c4 ♖h8 28. ♙b3 ♜e8 29. ♜xd6 ♞b8 30. ♜axd7 ♞xb3 31. ♞h4+– leads to a position in which White has an

extra pawn and exerts strong pressure against the enemy king's position.

24. ♖fd4!?

There are numerous attractive possibilities here. One of them is the computer move – 24. ♙a4!?

24... ♙xd4 25. ♖xd4 ♜xe3 26. ♞xc4+ ♖g7 27. fxe3 ♞xa7 28. ♖c6



28... ♖e5

Instead, 28... ♞c7 29. ♖xb8 ♞xb8 30. b4 ♖e5 is inferior in view of 31. ♞h4!+–

29. ♞d4 ♞c7 30. ♖xb8 ♞xb8

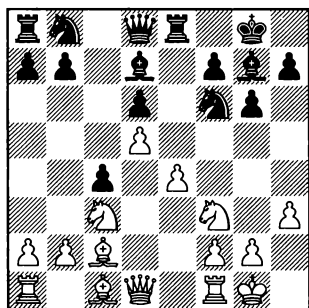
No better is 30... ♖b7, in view of 31. ♙xg6!? hxg6 32. ♖a6±

31. ♞xd6 ♞xd6 32. ♜xd6± and White has a clear advantage, with a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces.

B) 11... ♙d7

Black is preparing the thematic pawn advance b7-b5, but this move seems a bit awkward. Its basic drawback is that with a black bishop on d7 a central breakthrough becomes quite advanta-

geous for White, because the black bishop screens White's d5-pawn from the pressure of Black's pieces.



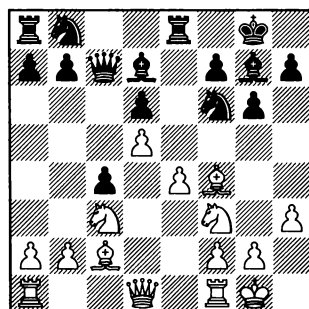
12. ♖f4

With this move White seizes the initiative.

Black is faced with a choice: **B1) 12... ♜c7**, or **B2) 12... ♜b6**.

B1) 12... ♜c7

This move also has a serious drawback, since Black's queen may come under attack after the possible central pawn break.



13. ♝e1!?

It would be interesting for

White to try the rarely played move 13. ♘d4!? – the knight is heading for the b5-square. There might follow: 13... ♙h5 (it would be fruitless for Black to play 13... ♜b6 in view of 14. ♙e3! and now 14... ♜xb2? loses to 15. ♘cb5+–) 14. ♘db5 ♙xb5 (Black cannot win a piece with 14... ♙a5 15. ♙h2 ♙xb5 16. ♘xb5 ♜xb5, because of 17. ♙a4! ♜b6 18. ♙xe8 ♘a6 19. ♙a4 ♘c5 20. ♙c2±) 15. ♘xb5 ♜d7 16. ♙h2 ♙e5 (16... ♜xb5 17. ♙a4 – see 14... ♙a5) 17. ♙xe5 ♝xe5 18. ♘a3!? b5 19. b3±; White exploits his lead in development and undermines his opponent's queenside pawn structure.

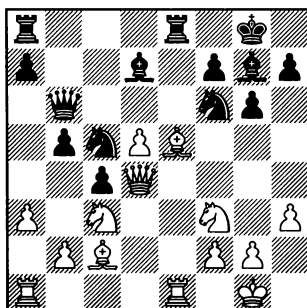
13... ♘a6 14. a3

White must hinder Black's possible queenside counterplay. Otherwise it might be rather difficult for him to keep the advantage, for example: 14. ♜d2 ♘h5 15. ♙h2 b5 16. g4 b4 17. gxh5 bxc3 18. bxc3 ♘c5.

14... ♘c5 15. ♜d2 b5 16. e5 dxe5 17. ♙xe5

This is an important gain of tempo.

17... ♜b6 18. ♜d4



9.♟f3 ♖e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙c2 ♙d7 12.♙f4 ♜b6

The position arising from the breakthrough in the centre is in White's favour.

18...♟h5

After 18...♟a6 19.♜h4 ♜d8 20.♜ad1 ♟c5 21.♜d4 ♜c8 22.d6± White's central passed pawn, supported by his pieces, gave him the advantage in the game Sturua – Hulak, Manila 1992.

After 18...♟b7 19.♜xb6 (here White has an alternative in 19.♜h4!?, by analogy with 18...♟a6 19.♜h4) 19...axb6 20.♙c7± and Black suffers from the weaknesses in his queenside pawn structure, Kakageldyev – Vaulin, Moscow 1995.

The line 18...♟a4 19.♙xa4 ♜xd4 20.♙xd4 bxa4 21.♜xe8+ ♜xe8 22.♙xa7 ♜a8 (22...♟e4 23.♙d4±) 23.♙d4 ♜b8 leads to a situation in which Black's disrupted queenside pawn structure guarantees White the advantage. For example: 24.♜c1 (better than 24.♜a2?! ♙f5 25.♟xa4 ♟xd5 26.♙xg7 ♟xg7 27.♟d4 ♙b1 28.♜a1 ♙d3 29.♟c6, draw, Dokutchayev – Notkin, Moscow 1991) 24...♜xb2 25.♟xa4 ♜b8 26.♟b6±

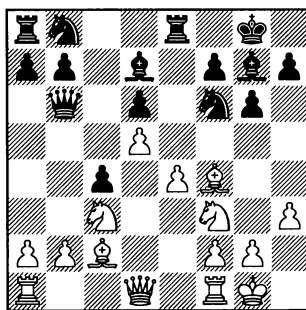
19.d6!

But not 19.♙xg7 ♟xg7 20.d6 ♜xe1+ (it would be a mistake for Black to play 20...♙c6?, in view of 21.♟e5 ♜ad8 22.♟g4 ♟d7 23.♟h6+ ♟f8 24.♜e7 ♜xd4 25.♜xf7# Kekelidze – Kountz, Deizisau

2001) 21.♜xe1 ♟ge6 22.♜d2 ♙c6 23.♟e5 ♜d8 24.♜d1±

19...♙c6 20.♙xg7 ♟xg7 21.♟e5±; White retains an edge, thanks to his strong passed pawn on d6 and the weakness of the dark squares on Black's kingside.

B2) 12...♜b6



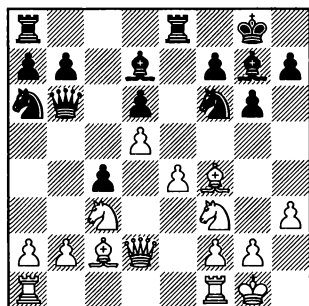
White must choose now between **B2a) 13.♜d2** and **B2b) 13.♜b1**.

In the one case he modestly protects his b2-pawn with his rook and, after the pawn break in the centre, he plans to deploy his queen on its ideal square on f3. In the other case he again relies on the central pawn break, but does not wish to waste time defending his pawn, protecting it only indirectly. In this way he gains a tempo, but his queen is unable to occupy the f3-square. We shall see that both lines have their advantages and disadvantages.

B2a) 13.♜d2

The pawn break e4-e5 is on the agenda.

13...♖a6



14.e5!

White should not delay this breakthrough. It appears that it always works in his favour when Black's light-squared bishop is placed on d7.

14...dxe5 15.♖xe5

This is better than 15.♗xe5 ♖b4 16.♗b1 ♖ad8 17.a3, in view of 17...♖bxd5! (17...♖d3 18.♗xd3 cxd3∞ Mikhalevski – Moldovan, Mamaia 1991) 18.♖xd5 ♖xd5 19.♗xg7 (19.♗xd5 ♗b5 20.♗e4 c3–+) 19...♗xg7 20.♗xd5 ♗b5 21.♗g5 c3–+

15...♗ac8

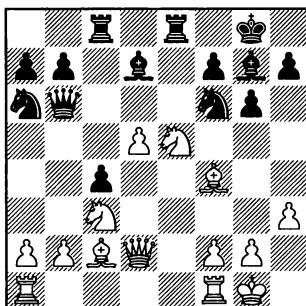
After 15...♖h5 16.♖xd7 ♗xb2 17.♗e5 ♗xe5 18.♖xe5 ♗xe5 19.♗ab1 ♗a3 20.♗xb7 ♗d6 21.♗d4± White's pieces are much more actively placed.

(diagram)

16.a3!?

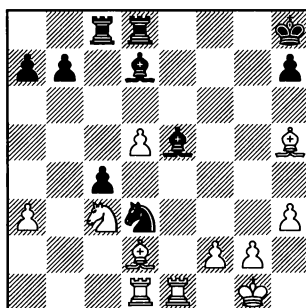
The energetic try 16.d6 enables Black to improve the coordination of his pieces with 16...♗e6.

16...♗ed8 17.♗ad1 ♖h5 18.♗e3 ♗xb2 19.♗xg6 ♗xd2 20.♗xf7+ ♖h8 21.♗xd2 ♗xe5 22.



♗xh5 ♖c5 23.♗fe1 ♖d3

White's extra pawn compensates for the strong position of Black's knight in the d3-outpost.



24.♗xe5!

This exchange sacrifice is very attractive, because Black will have great problems coordinating his pieces which are massed in the centre.

24...♖xe5 25.♗e1

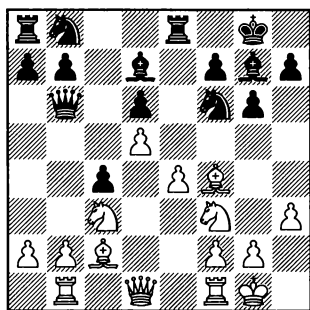
25.♗g5? ♗f8 26.♗e1 ♖g6 27.♗xg6 hxg6 28.♗e7 ♗cd8 29.♖e4 ♗de8 (but not 29...♗f5? 30.♗f6±) 30.♖d6 ♗xe7 31.♗xe7 ♗e8. Black's counter-sacrifice of the exchange will obviously be sufficient to draw, but he could try giving up his c4-pawn instead. 32.♖xe8

9.♟f3 ♞e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙c2 ♙d7 12.♙f4 ♜b6

♙xe8. The presence of bishops of opposite colours guarantees that Black will have no great problems.

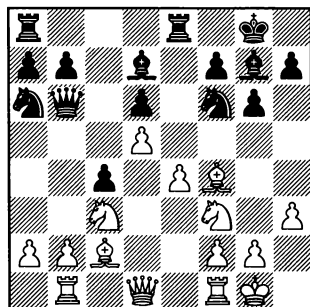
25...♟g6 26.♜e4 ♜g7 27. ♙c3+ ♜h6 28.g4 (28.♙d1!? ♞e8 29.g4) 28...♙a4 29.♟g3! ♞d5 30.h4 ♜xh4 31.♞e6+ ♟g6 32.f4+—

B2b) 13.♞b1



This move is stronger than ♞d2, as we shall try to convince you.

13...♜a6



14.e5!

There is no point in White de-

laying the breakthrough in the centre. Black need not fear 14.b4 cxb3 (it is not good for him to lose access to the c5-square, so he must capture en passant) 15.♞xb3 ♜c7 16.♜d4 ♞ac8!∞ Black has parried the threat of his opponent's knight sortie to the b5-square and as a result White has not achieved anything with the pawn-advance b2-b4, much rather the opposite... (it is inferior for Black to play 16...♞ad8 17.♜db5 ♙xb5 18.♜xb5 ♜e7 19.♞e3± Azmaiparashvili – Ljubojevic, Groningen 1993).

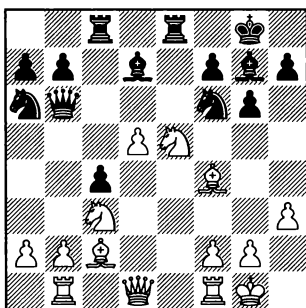
After 14.a3 ♜c5 15.♞e1 Black has the interesting try 15...♜a6!? (15...♞ad8!? is also possible, but it is less accurate to play 15...♞ac8 16.♞d2 a5 17.e5 dxe5 18.♜xe5 ♜b3 19.♙xb3 and here 19...cxb3 20.♞e3!?± would lead to a slight edge for White, while the other possible capture 19...♜xb3?! gave White a considerable advantage after 20.♜xd7 ♜xd7 21.d6± Krasenkow – Honfi, Passau 1993) 16.e5 (after 16.♞d2 ♞ad8!?∞, Black is well-prepared for his opponent's central breakthrough, whereas 16...b5?! 17.e5! dxe5 18.♙xe5 ♜h5 19.d6± maintained White's advantage in Lazarev – Lalic, Pontoise 2006) 16...dxe5 17.♜xe5 (after 17.♙xe5 ♜d3∞ the point of placing Black's queen on the a6-square becomes quite clear) 17...♙f5 18.♙xf5 gxf5∞; Black has managed to organize counterplay on the light squares,

at the cost of weakening his pawn structure, Lalic – Wedberg, Andorra 1993.

14...dxe5 15.♖xe5 ♖ac8

Protecting the c4-pawn.

The game Arlandi – Tatai, Verona 1995 ended in a very amusing fashion – 15...♗xh3?? 16.gxh3 ♖h5 17.♗e3+–



16.d6!?

This is White's most energetic response.

After 16.♗e3?! ♗a5 (after 16...♖c5 17.♗d4± White's bishop manoeuvre paid off in the game, Mellado – Yudasin, Seville 1993) 17.♖xd7 (17.♗d4 ♖b4 18.♖xd7 ♖xd7 19.♗xg7 ♖xg7 20.♗a4 ♖ed8=) 17...♖xd7 18.♗d2 ♖cd8!?!∞ Black's knight will either attack White's d-pawn or head for the d3-square. However, it is also possible for White to play 16.a3!?!±, emphasizing the misplacement of Black's knight on a6.

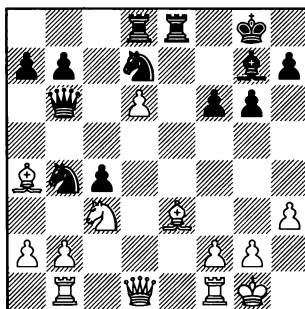
16...♖b4

Other attempts to bring his knight into play do not give Black equality.

If 16...♖c5 then 17.b4! is a very good response (we can see now how useful the rook can be on the b1-square) 17...cxb3 18.♗xb3 ♖xb3 19.♖xd7 ♖xd7 20.♖d5± Zilka – Petrik, Czech Republic 2011.

If 16...♖b8 a good continuation is 17.♗e1 (better than 17.♗f3 ♖c6 18.♖xd7 ♖xd7 19.♗a4, Fishbein – B.Larsen, New York 1990, 19...♖d4! 20.♗d1 ♖cd8 21.♗g5 and now, instead of the rather feeble 21...f6 22.♗e3 f5 23.b3↑, it would be very good for Black to play the resolute 21...♗xd6! 22.♗xd8 ♖xd8∞ when he can rely on gaining full compensation for the exchange sacrifice; his pieces are very active and he can advance his queenside pawns quite effectively) 17...♖c6 18.♖xd7 ♖xd7 19.♗e4!?!±

17.♖xd7 ♖xd7 18.♗a4 ♖cd8 19.♗g5 f6 20.♗e3



20...♗xe3

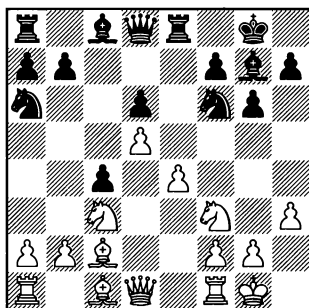
Black must sacrifice the exchange, because after 20...♗a5 21.♗d4+– his position is lost.

9.♟f3 ♖e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙c2 ♜a6

21.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 22.♙h1 ♗e6
23.♙b5 ♜e5 24.♗a4 ♜bd3
25.♗xa7 ♗xd6 26.♗xb7 f5 27.
a4± and Black's compensation
for the exchange is insufficient.

C) 11...♜a6

Generally speaking, this move
cannot be described as Black's ab-
solute best, but at first sight it
looks the most logical and con-
sistent. His knight is heading im-
mediately for the vacated c5-
square, at the same time eyeing
the b4-square.



We shall now analyse in detail
**C1) 12.♙f4, C2) 12.♙e3 and C3)
12.♖e1.**

The alternatives for White are
all inferior.

After 12.a3 ♜c5 13.♖e1 Black
can play 13...b5! (it is too slow to
play 13...a6?!, Villeneuve – Dail-
let, Angers 1990, since this allows
White to hinder b7-b5 with 14.a4!
♙d7 15.e5 dxe5 16.♜xe5 b5 17.
d6↑; Black also fails to equalize
with 13...♜fd7?! 14.♙f4 ♗b6 15.

♖b1 ♜e5 16.♜xe5 ♙xe5, Gormally
– Ionescu, Cardiff 1997, and now
17.♙xe5! when 17...♗xe5 allows
White to play 18.♗d4±, while af-
ter 17...dxe5 18.♙a4!? the bishop
threatens to go to b5, setting
Black difficult problems in pro-
tecting his c4-pawn, and after
18...♙d7 19.♙xd7 ♜xd7 20.♗a4
♗c7 21.♜b5 ♗c5 22.♗b4! ♖ed8
23.♜d6 b5 24.♜b7 ♗xb4 25.axb4
♖dc8 26.♖a1± White has a clear
advantage) 14.♜d4 a6. Black has
achieved the b7-b5 advance and
now has a comfortable game: 15.
♙f4 ♙b7 (slightly inferior is 15...
♜h5 16.♙e3 ♜f6, Zimmerman –
Bu Xiangzhi, Budapest 1999, and
now 17.♜c6! ♗c7 18.a4 b4 19.
♜xb4 ♖b8 20.♜c6 ♖xb2 21.♙d4↑)
16.♗d2 ♗b6∞

Black can continue with his
own plans after 12.♙g5 ♙d7!? (an
alternative is 12...♜c5!? 13.♜d2
b6∞) 13.♖e1 (Black has nothing to
worry about after 13.a4 ♗b6 14.
♖b1 ♖ac8 15.♖e1 ♜b4∞) 13...♗b6
(the thematic pawn advance 13...
b5 14.a3 would allow White to
successfully carry out his pawn
break in the centre: if 14...♗b6
15.e5 dxe5 16.♜xe5↑, or 14...♜c5
15.e5 dxe5 16.♜xe5↑ Bets – Dinu,
Bucharest 1996) 13...♗b6 14.♖b1
♜b4∞

C1) 12.♙f4

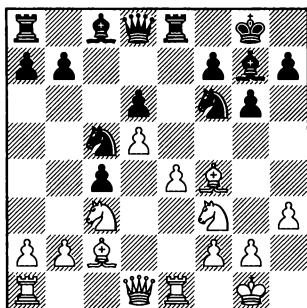
After this move Black can
reach a playable position.

12...♜c5

It is bad for Black to play 12... ♖c7?! 13.a4± when he will have great difficulty in ever advancing with b7-b5.

13.♞e1

After 13. ♖d2 Black must play 13...b6! – this is the only way to protect his c4-pawn (13...a6? 14. a4 ♖c7 15. ♞e2 ♖h5 16. ♙h2± Barsov – Bakhmatov, Essen Borbeck 1999) 14.♞e1 ♙a6∞ Bagrationi – Kostromin, Anapa 2008.



13...b5!

Thematic move.

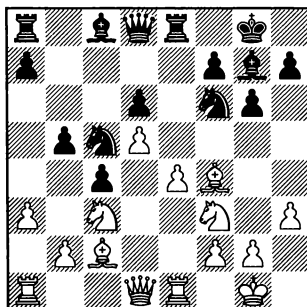
It would be clearly inferior for Black to play 13... ♞b6?! in view of 14. ♞b1 ♖fd7 (if 14... ♙d7, instead of 15. ♖d2?! ♞a6 16.a4 ♞ac8∞ Slajs – Jenc, Tabor 2008, White can break through in the centre with 15.e5! dxe5 16. ♖xe5 ♞ad8 17. ♞f3↑) 15. ♖d2! (matters are less clear after 15. ♞d2 a6 16. ♞e3 ♖e5∞ Janjgava – Huzman, Uzhgorod 1988) 15... ♞a6 16.a4! ♙xc3 (otherwise White's knight will go to b5) 17.bxc3 ♖e5 18. ♙xe5 dxe5 19. ♞b5± Dautov – Dinstuhl, Germany 1992.

After the insertion of the moves 13... ♖h5 14. ♙h2 and only then 14... ♞b6, with 15. ♞b1± White again has the very unpleasant threat of breaking through in the centre with e4-e5.

14.a3

The exchange of pawns – 14. ♖xb5 ♖fxe4 15. ♙xe4 ♖xe4 16. ♞c2 ♙a6 17.a4 f5∞ fails to provide White with any advantage, Le Roux – Hou Yifan, Shenzhen 2005.

We have often seen that the central pawn break e4-e5 can lead to a very promising position for White but then, as a rule, Black's light-squared bishop was on d7. Here it is on c8, which is in Black's favour, since it can go to b7: 14.e5 dxe5 15. ♖xe5 ♙b7! 16.d6 ♖fd7↑ with an excellent position for Black, Gorbatenko – Maslik, Banská Stiavnica 2010.



14... ♞b6!?

The alternative here is 14...

9. ♖f3 ♜e8 10. 0-0 c4 11. ♙c2 ♜a6

♙b7!? 15. ♜d4 (after 15. ♜d2 a5!↑, Black seized the initiative in the game Fuhrmann – Schumacher, Bremen 1998) and Black has no problems at all after 15... ♜b6= or 15... a6!?=

It is also possible to play 14... a6, but I dislike this move since it puts off indefinitely the possibility of advancing with a5, followed by b5-b4. 15. ♜d2 ♜b6 16. ♙h6 (16. e5 dxe5 17. ♙xe5 is harmless in view of 17... ♙b7) 16... ♙h8 17. ♙e3 ♜fd7∞ Iskushnyh – Genba, Moscow 1996.

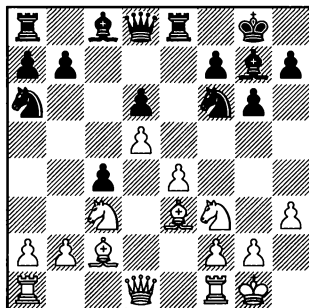
15.e5 dxe5 16. ♜xe5

After 16. ♙xe5 it is once again very good for Black to play 16... ♙b7.

16... ♙b7 17. ♜f3 a5!? and Black is at least not worse. In tournament practice the move 17... ♜ac8∞ was tried in Mitenkov – Notkin, Moscow 1996.

C2) 12. ♙e3!?

This move looks quite logical. White develops a piece and at the same time hinders ♜a6-c5.



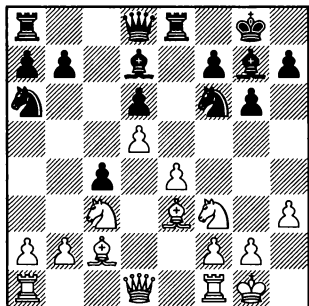
12... ♙d7

But not 12... ♜c5?, because of 13. e5±

After 12... ♜b4 13. ♜d2! (13. ♙b1 ♙d7 is less clear) 13... ♜xc2 14. ♜xc2± Black has problems protecting his c4-pawn, V. Bagirov – Vasiukov, Moscow 1991.

For similar reasons Black should avoid 12... ♜d7 13. ♜d2! (13. ♜e2 ♜b4 is less clear, Yasin-sky – Nevostrujev, Orel 1992) 13... ♜e5 (13... ♜b6 14. a4!±) 14. f4 ♜d3 15. ♜b1 f5 16. ♜xc4 fxe4 17. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 18. ♙xd3 ♜e8. White has an extra pawn and can develop a strong initiative on the king-side. For example, one attractive continuation is 19. f5! (he is also clearly better after 19. ♙xg6 hxg6 20. ♜xg6 ♙f5 21. ♜xf5 b5 22. ♜g4 and here 22... bxc4? is bad in view of 23. ♙d4 ♜e7 24. f5+–, while after 22... ♜e4 23. ♜ae1 bxc4 24. ♙f2 ♜xe1 25. ♜xe1 ♜f6 26. ♜e4± White has more than sufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece) 19... b5 20. f6! bxc4 (20... ♙xf6 21. ♙xg6+–) 21. ♙xg6! ♙xf6 22. ♙xh7+ ♜h8 23. ♜g6+– with a crushing attack.

Black fails to equalize after 12... b5 13. ♜xb5 ♜xe4 14. ♙d4 ♜ac5 15. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 16. ♜d4± and in this variation the weakness of his c4-pawn is important for the evaluation of the position, Jan-kovic – Bonafede, Venice 2003.



13.a4!?

White radically prevents the possibility of b7-b5.

Here, just as on move 11, it is too slow for White to play 13.a3. After 13...c8 14.d4 c5 15.e1 (after 15.e5 dxe5 16.dxe5, Black can continue with the strong line 16...dxd5! 17.dxd5 e5 18.e5 e5 19.d4 g5, which leaves him with an extra pawn, but 16...b5? 17.f3± led to an advantage for White in Kishnev – Moskalenko, Budapest 1991) 15...h5 16.xg7 xg7 17.e5 f4! (after 17...dxe5?! 18.dxe5 f6 19.dxd7 dxd7 20.e8 e8 21.a4 d8 22.xd7 xd7 23.g4± Black has great problems, Z.Polgar – Tolnai, Budapest 1991) 18.exd6 exe1+ 19.xe1 f6 20.e5 e8 21.fxf6+ xxf6 – Black's position is perfectly playable, J.Horvath – Tolnai, Budapest 1992.

I think it would be too straightforward for White to play 13.d2, provoking his opponent to advance his b-pawn. In fact Black can rise to this provocation and

play 13...b5!? (an alternative is 13...c8) 14.a4 b4 15.d5 c3! (after 15...xb5?! 16.axb5, no matter where Black retreats his knight White maintains a considerable advantage: 16...c7 17.dxc4 dx4 18.a4 b5 19.xb4 b8 20.xe4 xe4 21.d3 e8 22.a1±, or 16...c5, Lewandowski – Czechowski, Bydgoszcz 2004, 17.xc5! dxc5 18.dxc4 dx4 19.d6! e6 20.xe4 xe4 21.b3±. Another interesting try is 15...b3?!, but although the arising positions are rather non-standard, this is too risky, for example 16.b1 dxd5 17.exd5 xb2. Now 18.e4! c3 and with the energetic response 19.dxd6!? xa1 20.xb3! he has a considerable advantage, e.g. 20...b2 21.dxe8 xe8 22.d6 b8 23.xa7 b4 24.d5! c8 25.d4! xa4 26.d6 xc6 27.xc6 a1 28.d7 d8 29.d4+–, or 20...f6 21.dxe8 xe8 22.d4±) 16.bxc3 bxc3 17.dxc3 c8 18.a3 a5 19.a2 h5. Black has serious compensation for the sacrificed pawn, for example: 20.d3 c5 21.d3 b3 22.xb3 xa4 23.a3 xd1 24.xa5 c2 25.xc2 xc2=

For the sake of completeness, I should also mention the logical move 13.d4!?, which has been tried several times in practice.

(diagram)

13...c7

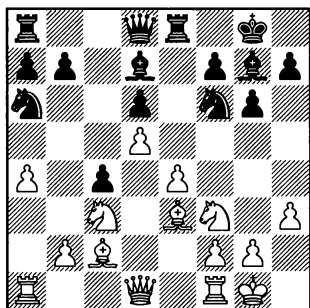
It is inferior for Black to play

9.♖f3 ♜e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙c2 ♜a6

15.♙b1 a6 16.a5 ♙b5 17.♜f3±
White has the better prospects.

C3) 12.♞e1!?

This is not only a thematic move, but it also defends against a possible 12...♜c5.



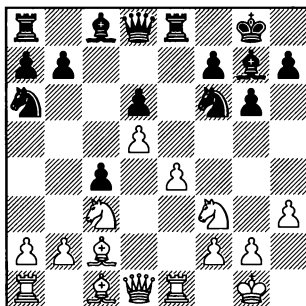
13...♞c8 14.a5! (14.♙d4 ♜b4∞ Tella – Morgado, Parnaiba 1995) 14...♜c5 15.♜d2, with the idea of answering 15...a6 with the pawn break in the centre: 16.e5! dxe5 17.♜xc4±

White has a great advantage after 13...♞a5 14.♜d2 ♞ec8 15.♞b1!? (another interesting try is 15.♞e2!? ♜b4 16.♙b1 ♞a6 17.♞a3! ♞c7 18.♜f3!± White's knight is heading for the b5-square; 18.♜b5?! ♙xb5 19.axb5 ♞xb5 20.b3 ♞e8 21.bxc4, Kakageldyev – Moldovan, Romania 1994, 21...♜d7 22.♜b3 b6∞) 15...♜b4 16.♙d1 ♜d3 (16...♞a6 17.♙e2) 17.♜xc4 ♞xc4 18.♞xd3 ♞ac8 19.♙f3± Lputian – Dumitrache, Cappelle la Grande 1991.

Black fails to achieve full equality with 13...♜b4 14.♙b1 ♞a5 15.♞d2± Karner – Stanec, Oberwart 2002.

14.♜d2 ♜b4

After 14...♜c5?! 15.♞e2! Black has problems with the protection of his c4-pawn.



12...♜b4

Now 12...♜c5 leads to problems for Black, based on the weakness of the c4-pawn. 13.♜d2 (it would be less principled for White to play 13.a4, although even then he maintains an edge after 13...♙d7 14.♙f4 ♞b6 15.♞b1 ♞ac8 16.e5 dxe5 17.♜xe5 ♜b3?! 18.♙e3± Shulman – A.Ivanov, Vladivostok 1994, or 13...b6 14.♙g5 ♙a6 15.♜d4±) 13...b6!? (after 13...♜d3 14.♙xd3 cxd3 15.♜f3 ♜d7 White's best move is 16.♙e3!±; if he captures the pawn immediately with 16.♞xd3 then after 16...♜c5 17.♞c2 f5 18.♙g5, Solaesa Navalpotro – Perez Cameselle, Madrid 2002, Black has a perfectly playable game: 18...♞a5!? 19.♜d2±) 14.♜xc4 ♙a6 15.

Chapter 6

♖a3! Now Black will find it difficult to prove that he has enough compensation for the pawn, for example: 15...b5 16.♖axb5 ♙xb5 17.♖xb5 ♜fxe4 18.♞e2! ♜b6 19.a4 a6 20.♜d4 ♜xf2 21.♞xf2 ♜d3 22.♙xd3 ♙xd4 23.♞f1±

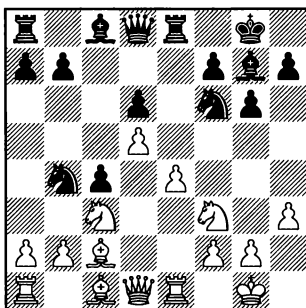
The move 12...♙d7 has its drawbacks as well. Now, with Black's bishop already on d7, White can try to manage without the move a2-a3 by playing 13. ♙f4!? (however, 13.a3!? also leads to a very comfortable game for White after 13...b5 14.♙f4±, or 13...♜c5 14.e5!? dxe5 15.♜xe5±, or 13...♜h5 14.♙g5 ♜b6 15.♞b1 ♜c5 16.♞d2±) 13...♜b6 14.♞b1 (14. ♞d2, Midoux – Olivier, France 2006, is inferior in view of 14... ♜h5! 15.♙e3 ♜xb2 16.♜d4 when White has compensation for the pawn, but the position remains rather unclear, for example: 16... ♜a3 17.♞ab1 ♞ad8∞) 14...♜b4 15.a3 ♜xc2 16.♞xc2 ♞ac8 17.♞d2±

Black has another possibility here in 12...♜d7 13.♙e3 ♜ac5 14. ♙d4 (14.♞e2!?) 14...♜e5 15.♜xe5 ♙xe5 16.♙xe5 ♞xe5 17.f4±, but this does not promise him full equality either, Harmon – Rough, Philadelphia 1998.

(diagram)

13. ♙b1

Usually a move like this is played automatically, but here White could consider repressing his affection for the advantage of



the bishop pair and allow the exchange of his light-squared bishop with the move 13. ♙f4!?

13...♜d7

White is also better after 13... ♙d7 14.♙f4!? (14.♙e3!? ♞c8 15. ♞d2±) 14...♜b6 15.a4 ♞ac8 16.♙e3 ♞a6 17.♜d4± Yang – Tuhrim, Philadelphia 2011.

14.a3 ♜a6

Black's more aggressive try 14...♜d3 is based on a pawn-sacrifice: 15.♙xd3 cxd3 16.♙e3 b6 17.♙g5! (Black has some compensation for the pawn if his opponent plays immediately 17.♞xd3 ♜c5, Peskov – Omelja, Rodatycki 2006) 17...f6 18.♙d2±. White is in no hurry to win the pawn and his "reward" might be the transfer of his knight to d4 and from there to e6 or c6.

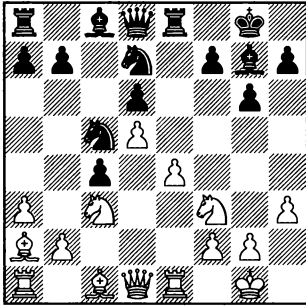
15. ♙a2 ♜ac5

If 15...♜b6, then 16.a4±

(diagram)

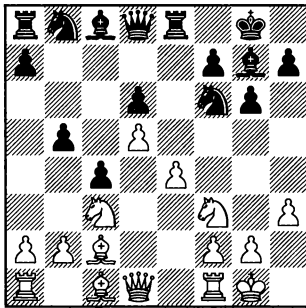
16.♙xc4 ♙xc3 17.bxc3 ♞xe4 18.♞xe4 ♜xe4 19.♞d4± White can rely on gaining an edge owing to the weakness of the dark squares in his opponent's camp.

9. ♖f3 ♜e8 10. 0-0 c4 11. ♙c2 b5



D) 11...b5

This is Black's most principled response. He tries to lend immediate support to his far-advanced pawn on c4.



Now White has three sensible possibilities: **D1) 12.a3**, **D2) 12.♙e1** and **D3) 12.♜xb5**.

D1) 12.a3

This move is a bit too timid. It enables Black to deploy his pieces in the most harmonious fashion.

12...♜bd7

This is a sharp move.

It is obviously bad for Black to play 12...a5?!, because of 13. ♜xb5 (it is less convincing for White

to play 13. ♜d4 ♙a6 14. ♜dxb5 ♜xe4 15. ♙xe4 ♙xb5 16. ♜xb5 ♜xe4 17. ♜f3 ♜h4 18. ♙f4 ♙xb2 19. ♜ae1 ♙e5 20. ♙xe5 dxe5 21. ♜xe5 ♜d7 22. ♜e3 ♜f6 23. ♜e2±) 13... ♜xe4 14. ♙xe4 ♜xe4, due to 15. ♙g5! (15. ♜d2?! ♜h4∞ Yang – Dejmek, Stillwater 2007) 15... ♜d7 16. ♜c2±

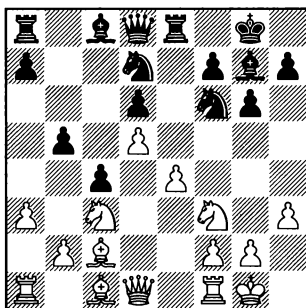
White also retains the initiative after 12... ♙d7 13. ♙f4 ♜b6 14. ♜e1!? (it might be a bit premature to try 14.e5 dxe5 15. ♜xe5, in view of 15... ♙c8! and the bishop is being sent, slowly but just in time, to the correct square b7, leaving the position rather unclear. This leads to an endgame which looks slightly better for White, but still not very clear, after 14. ♜d4 ♜xd4 15. ♜xd4 ♜xd5 16. ♜xd5 ♙xd4 17. ♜c7 ♜c6) 14... ♜a6 15.e5 dxe5 16. ♜xe5 ♜c5 (16... ♙c8 – with the inclusion of the moves ♜e1 and ♜a6, this manoeuvre is no longer any good, since White now has a very unpleasant line for his opponent: 17.a4! b4 18. ♜e4 ♜xe4 19. ♜xe4 ♙xe5 20. ♜xe5↑) 17. ♜f3 a6 18.g4↑

Black cannot equalize with 12... ♜a6 owing to 13. ♙e3! (13. ♜e1 is not convincing here, not because of 13... ♜b8 14. ♙f4 ♜h5 15. ♙e3 ♜c5 16.e5↑ Topalov – Nedev, Star Dojran 1991, or 13...b4 14. axb4 ♜xb4, Hoeksema – Van der Werf, Enschede 1990, 15. ♙f4!?±, but on account of 13... ♜c5 14. ♜d4 ♙b7!, when it might look as though Black is simply losing a pawn, but this is not the case: 15.

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♠xb5 a6 16.♠d4 ♠xd5) 13...♠d7
14.♠d2 ♠c7 15.♠d4 ♠c5 16.♠fe1±

It is possible that Black's safest line here is 12...a6 13.♠f4 ♠b7 14.♠e1 ♠b6, smoothly continuing his development. It only remains for him to bring his knight into play and the resulting position could be considered as complex but approximately equal. Both sides will have problems finding a way to improve their positions. I think that if Black manages to advance b7-b5 without any dire consequences, he solves all his opening problems.



13.♠xb5

If White plays anything else, Black has every chance of advancing a7-a5 in one move, avoiding the need to play a7-a6.

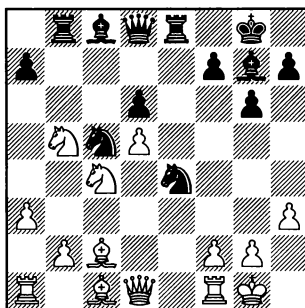
13...♠c5 14.♠d2 ♠fxe4

It is only slightly worse to capture with the other knight: 14...♠xe4 15.♠xc4 ♠a6 (15...♠b7 16.♠xe4 ♠xe4 17.♠e3±) 16.a4±

15.♠xc4 ♠b8

(diagram)

16.a4

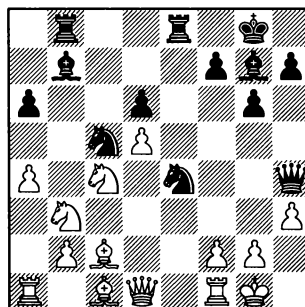


After 16.♠xa7 ♠a6 17.♠c6 ♠h4 18.♠xb8 ♠xc4 19.♠c6 ♠xf1 20.♠xf1 ♠xf2 21.♠d2 ♠fe4 22.♠e1 (22.♠e1 ♠g5) 22...♠xb2 23.♠b4 a dynamically balanced position arises. The game might continue 23...♠g7 24.a4 ♠a6 25.♠xe4 ♠xe4 26.♠xe4 ♠xe4 27.♠xa6 ♠d4+ 28.♠f1 ♠b1+ 29.♠e1 ♠f5+ 30.♠e2 ♠c2+ 31.♠f3 ♠b3+ with a draw by perpetual check.

16...a6 17.♠d4 ♠b7 18.♠b3

After 18.♠c6 ♠xc6 19.dxc6 d5, it is White who must worry about maintaining equality.

18...♠h4±

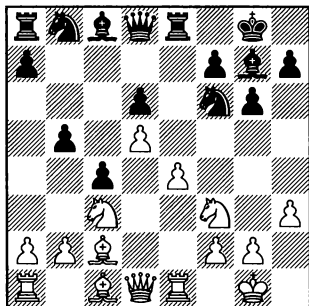


The active deployment of Black's pieces fully compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

9. ♖f3 ♜e8 10. 0-0 c4 11. ♙c2 b5

D2) 12. ♙e1

White may try to postpone the move a2-a3 for a while, but this does not change much. I will repeat that if Black succeeds in advancing b7-b5 he should have no problems whatsoever.



12...b4!?

After 12... ♙d7?! 13. a3 ♘a6 14. ♙f4 ♜b6 15. e5 dxe5 16. ♘xe5 ♘c5 17. ♜f3↑, White has the initiative, Granero Roca – Sanz Alonso, Navalmoral 2000.

It is quite acceptable for Black to play 12...a6!? 13. ♙f4 ♙b7 (13... ♜b6!?) 14. ♜d2 ♜b6∞ with a complicated position, S. Pedersen – T. Ernst, Gausdal 1992.

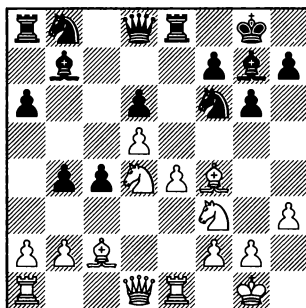
13. ♘b5 a6

After 13... ♘a6? 14. ♙f4 Black has problems with the protection of his d6-pawn.

After the tactical complications arising from 13... ♜b6 14. ♘d6! ♜xd6 15. e5 ♜d8 (15... ♜xd5? loses to 16. exf6 ♜xd1 17. ♙xd1 ♜xe1+ 18. ♘xe1 ♙xf6 19. ♙f3+–; if 15... ♜f8 16. exf6 ♙xf6 17. ♜xe8 ♜xe8 18. ♘d2 ♜b5 19. ♘e4± White's

advantage is beyond doubt) 16. ♙g5! (this is much more convincing than 16. exf6 ♙xf6 17. ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 18. ♘d2) 16... ♘bd7 17. exf6 (17. ♙a4?! ♙b7 18. exf6 ♜xe1+ 19. ♜xe1 ♘xf6 20. ♜xb4 ♙xd5 21. ♙d1 ♜b6!)=) 17... ♜xe1+ 18. ♜xe1 ♙xf6 19. ♙xf6 ♜xf6 20. ♜xb4 (here 20. ♙d1 is weaker, not because of 20... ♙b7?! 21. ♜xb4 ♘b6 22. a4 a5 23. ♜b5± Granero Roca – S. Kovacevic, Almassora 2000, but on account of 20... ♘b6 21. ♜xb4 ♙xh3∞) 20... ♘b6 21. ♙e4 ♙b7 22. ♙d1 ♜e8 23. ♙d4 ♜f4 24. ♜d2± and White has a clear advantage.

14. ♘bd4 ♙b7 15. ♙f4

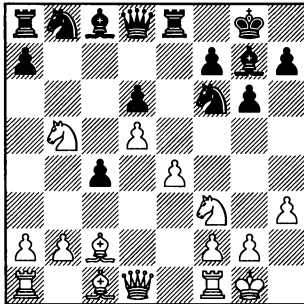


15...♘bd7!?

This is an interesting attempt by Black to solve his development problems by tactical means.

Not 15... ♘h5?! 16. ♙h2 ♜b6 17. ♙a4 ♜d8 18. ♜c1± Zucchelli – Burani, Arco 2009.

16. ♙xd6 ♘xe4 17. ♙xe4 ♘f6 18. ♙e5 ♘xe4 19. ♜xe4 ♜xd5 20. ♙xg7 ♜xe4 21. ♙f6 h6 White has a slight material advantage, but he is not better.

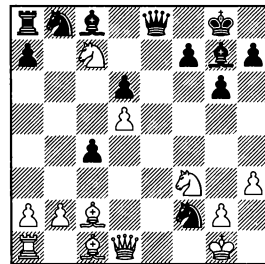
D3) 12. ♖xb5

Naturally this is White's most principled continuation.

12... ♖xe4 13. ♗xe4!

No doubt 13. ♗e1 looks the most logical and natural here, but Black then has a very testing riposte: 13... ♖xf2! (after 13... a6?! White's best line is 14. ♖a3! c3 15. ♖b1 cxb2 16. ♗xb2 ♗xb2 17. ♗xb2 ♖f6 18. ♗xe8+ ♖xe8 19. ♖c4 ♖d7 20. ♗a4+; if 13... ♖b6?! 14. ♖bd4 f5 15. ♗e3 and now after 15... ♖a5 16. ♖d2 ♖xd5 17. ♖xc4±, or 15... ♖xb2 16. ♗xe4 fxe4 17. ♖g5 ♖d7 18. ♖ge6± White retains a clear advantage, Mollov – Rouneau, Douai 1993; Black's best alternative to capturing on f2 is the modest retreat 13... ♖f6 – White then has the better prospects, but he cannot gain any serious advantage with either 14. ♗xe8+ ♖xe8 15. ♖e2 ♖d7 16. ♖xc4± or 16. ♗g5 ♗f6 17. ♗xf6 ♖dxf6 18. ♖xc4 ♗b7 19. ♖c3 ♗c8 20. ♖b5 ♗xd5 21. ♖xd5 ♗xc2 22. ♖e3±) 14. ♗xe8+ (but not 14. ♖xf2? ♗xe1 15. ♖xe1 ♖e8+; 15. ♖xe1 ♖b6+ 16. ♖bd4 ♗xd4+ 17.

♖xd4 ♖xd4+ and White's position is very bad, Radosevic – Velimirovic, Belgrade 1993) 14... ♖xe8 15. ♖c7! This is the only move, but it is good enough. (15. ♖d6? ♖d7 16. ♖xf2 ♖xd6 17. ♖e2, M. Braun – G. Toth, Paks 2000, 17... ♗b7! 18. ♖xc4 ♗xd5 19. ♖c8+ ♗f8+ is better for Black)

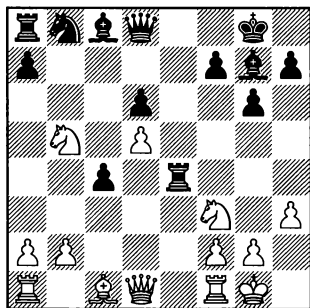


15... ♖e7 (15... ♖d8 and 15... ♖d7 make little or no difference) 16. ♖e1 ♖xc7 17. ♖e8+ ♗f8 18. ♗h6 ♖xh3+ (this is another “only move”, since after 18... ♖d7? 19. ♖g5 ♖xh3+ 20. gxf3 ♖c5+ 21. ♖f1 ♖xd5 22. ♗e4 ♗a6 23. ♖xf8+ – Czebe – G. Pinter, Budapest 1996, or 22... c3 23. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 24. ♗xd5+ – Black loses material) 19. gxf3 ♖c5+ 20. ♖g2 (20. ♖f1? ♗xh3+ 21. ♖e2 ♖c8+ –) 20... ♖d7 21. ♗e1 ♗b7 22. ♖xd7 ♗xd5. We have reached by force a very complex position with an unusual material balance: White has a knight for three pawns. His prospects are slightly better, but turning this edge into something substantial might prove difficult. 23. ♗xf8 (after 23. ♗d2 ♗c6 24. ♖g4 ♗g7 25. ♗c3 ♖b8 26. ♗e2, Black solves all his problems with 26... ♗e5!,

9.♟f3 ♖e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙c2 b5 12.♟xb5 ♟xe4 13.♙xe4 ♖xe4

whereas after 26...♙xc3 27.bxc3 ♖b2 28.♟g3± he has to play very carefully, e.g. if 28...♖xa2?! 29.♙xg6 ♖xe2 30.♙d3±) 23...♙xf3+ (23...♖xf8 24.♙e4 ♙e6 25.♖c6 ♖b4 26.♖e2 ♖c8 27.♖b7 ♖c5 28.♖e7 d5 29.♖xc5 ♖xc5 30.♙c2±) 24.♟xf3 ♖xf8 25.♖e7± White is slightly better, but there is a hard struggle ahead.

13...♖xe4



We shall now analyse two possibilities for White. The sharp move **D3a) 14.♟d2** and the positional try **D3b) 14.♙g5**.

White cannot count on achieving anything real with 14.♟g5 ♖e5! (better than 14...♖e8? 15.♖f3± f5? 16.♙f4 ♙e5 17.♟e6+- Dornauer – Somasundram, Linz 1997) 15.♖e1 (it is too risky for White to play 15.♙f4?, Potapov – Kuzuev, St Petersburg 1998, in view of 15...♙xg5 16.♙xg5 ♖xg5 17.♟c7 ♙xb2 18.♖b1 c3 19.♟xa8 ♙xh3 20.♖f3 ♙f5±; there is a repetition of moves after 15.♟f3 ♖e4). Now Black should continue with 15...♙f5!?∞, or 15...♟a6!?∞. The

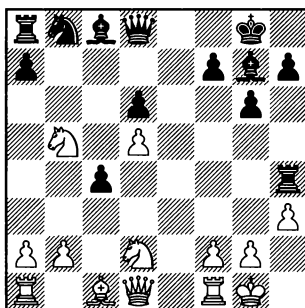
somewhat casual move 15...a6 would enable White to fight for the advantage with 16.♖xe5 ♙xe5 17.♟a3 c3 18.bxc3 ♙xc3 19.♖b1±

D3a) 14.♟d2

Many players consider that this move leads to equality, but I have found some nuances which lead me to believe it deserves greater consideration.

14...♖h4!

This is the only move. If 14...♖f4 15.♖e2± ♖f5 16.♟xc4 ♖xd5 White's simplest continuation is 17.♟bxd6± and if 17...♖xd6? 18.♟xd6 ♖xd6 19.♖e8 ♖f8 20.♖e4+-



15.♖e1!

Here 15.♖c2? is very bad in view of 15...♙xh3!+-, with the idea of 16.gxh3 ♖g5+ 17.♟h2 ♖g4+-

The move 15.♖e2?, also allows Black to play 15...♙xh3!± and attempting to restore the material balance immediately with 16.♟xc4? ♙xg2 17.♙xg2 ♖d7 18.♖h1 ♖xh1 19.♟xh1 ♖xb5+- turned out

Chapter 6

to be a further mistake in the game Karagiannis – Alexakis, Piraeus 1999.

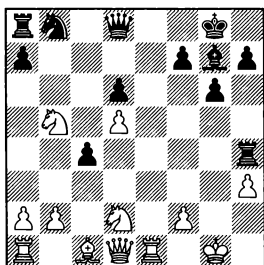
15...♙a6!

This is the best response.

Instead, 15...♙b7? is bad on account of 16.♘e4 ♖h5 17.♘exd6 ♖xd5 18.♗f3+- Prelevic – Danilovic, Subotica 2000.

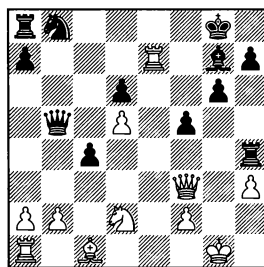
Black cannot be happy either with the outcome of 15...♙f5?! 16.♗e2± or 15...♘a6?! 16.♘e4±

For a long time it was considered that the best move was 15...♙xh3?!, but this is not true... 16.gxh3 (after 16.♘f3? Sadorra – Ochoa, Manila 2008, Black can play 16...♗g4! 17.g3 ♘a6+ and White is unable to trap his opponent's pieces, e.g. 18.♙h2 ♗d7 19.♘c3 ♘c5, or 18.♘h2 ♖xg3+ 19.fxg3 ♗b6+)



16...♗d7?! (Black can still avert complete disaster with 16...♗g5+ 17.♙f1 ♖xh3 and here the active attempt 18.♗e8+ ♙f8 19.♘f3 ♗h5∞ Rojo Huerta – Sanz Alonso, Madrid 2000, allowed Black to regain his sacrificed

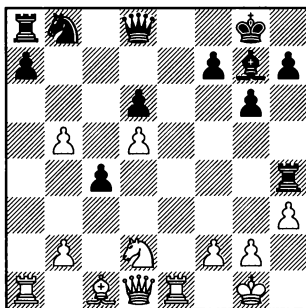
piece, but it is much stronger for White to play the immediate 18.♘f3!, since after 18...♗h5 he has the move 19.♘g1, while if 18...♖h1+ 19.♙e2 ♗e7+ 20.♙e3± White is much better, but there is still a lot of fight left) 17.♗f3! (White must counter-attack, because after 17.♘f3 ♖xh3 18.♘g5 ♖d3+ Black will capture the d5-pawn as well) 17...♗xb5 (the move 17...♖xh3 can be countered with 18.♗e7!±) 18.♗e7 f5



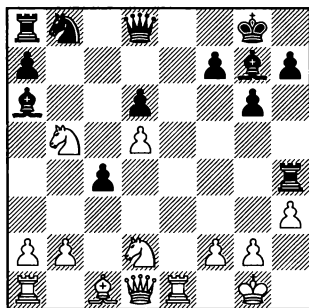
Black is in a precarious situation. His major pieces lack coordination and his king is in serious danger. Now the best way for White to gain a decisive advantage seems to be 19.♗g3 (but it appears that White has another good continuation in 19.a4 ♗c5 20.b4! cxb3 21.♖xg7!? ♙g7 22.♙b2+ ♙h6 23.♗g3+-; or 22...♙g8 23.♗e2+-; 20...♗d4 21. ♖a3 ♙f8 22.♖ae3 ♙e5 23.♖c7 ♗a1 24.♖c8+ ♙g7 25.♗e1+-; 21...♙e5 22.♗e8+ ♙f7 23.♖c8+-) 19...♙f6 20.♗xd6 ♙xe7 21.♗xe7 ♖xh3 (after 21...♖h5 22.♗e6+ ♙g7 White can bring his reserves on the queenside into the attack: 23.b3! c3 24.♗e5+ ♙g8 25.♘f3 ♘d7 26.♗e6+ ♙g7 27.

9. ♖f3 ♜e8 10. 0-0 c4 11. ♙c2 b5 12. ♜xb5 ♜xe4 13. ♙xe4 ♜xe4

♙e3+–) 22. ♜e6+ ♜g7 (22... ♜h8 23. ♜e5+ ♜g8 is no better in view of 24. ♖f3! ♜d7 25. ♙e3! ♜xf3 26. ♙d4+–, or if 22... ♜f8 23. ♖f3 ♜e8 then 24. ♖g5! ♜xe6 25. ♜xe6+ ♜e7 26. ♜c7+–) 23. ♖f3! ♜d7 (accepting the sacrifice with 23... ♜xf3 24. ♜e7+ ♜g8 25. ♙h6+– leads to an even faster checkmate) 24. ♖g5 ♜h4 25. ♜e7+ ♜g8 26. ♜e6+–



17... ♜d7



16.a4

White has another possibility here in 16. ♜c3!? but this may turn out to be insufficient in view of 16... ♜d7! (16... ♙b7 17. ♜de4 h6 18. ♜b5 ♙e5 19. f4 ♜b6+ 20. ♜h1 ♜xb5 21. fxg5 ♜xd7 22. ♜c3±) 17. ♜de4 h6 18. ♜a4 ♙xc3 19. bxc3 ♜xe4 20. ♜xe4 ♜c5 21. ♜c2 ♜xe4 22. ♜xe4 ♜e8 (22... ♜f6!?). Now Black has good drawing chances in the endgame thanks to the presence of bishops of opposite colours after 23. ♜xe8 23... ♜xe8 24. ♙h6 ♜e5 (24... ♙b7!?), or 23. ♜d4 ♜e5!? 24. ♜xe5 dxe5 25. ♙h6 ♜d8 26. ♜d1 ♜d6! (intending ♙b7).

16... ♙xb5 17. axb5

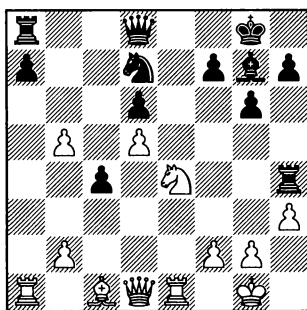
In practice Black has also tried 17... ♜d4. White should continue with 18. ♜e2! (the spectacular move 18. b6 is not the best: 18... ♜d7! 19. bxa7 ♜xd5 20. ♜f3 and here it is bad for Black to play 20... ♜d3? in view of 21. ♜b7 d5 22. ♖f3 ♜c5 23. ♜c6± Krasenkow – Bu Xiangzhi, Shenyang 1999, but with 20... ♜c5! Black should manage to survive, for example: 21. ♜b7 c3 22. bxc3 ♜xc3 23. ♜a3 ♜xa3 24. ♙xa3 ♙d4=, or 21. ♜e4 ♜e5 22. ♜a3 ♜d3 23. ♜xc5 ♜xe1 24. ♜b7 ♜d7 25. ♜xd6 ♜d3 26. ♜a6 ♜xc1 27. ♜b6 ♙f8 28. ♜b8 ♜xa7 29. ♜xc1 ♜a4 30. ♜xc4 ♜b4=) 18... ♜d7 19. ♜xc4 ♜xd5 (if 19... ♜e5 20. b3± Black still has difficulties after 20... ♜xd5 21. ♜e3 ♜c5 22. ♙a3±, because he will have great problems with the protection of his d6-pawn) 20. ♙f4 ♙f8 (after 20... ♜xb5? 21. ♜xd6 ♜xb2 22. ♜f3 ♜f8 23. ♜ad1+– Black cannot avoid losing material. White is threatening to move his knight to the c4-square and after 23...

Chapter 6

♖b6 24.♙g5 f5 25.♙e7 ♖b8 26. ♗e3 h5 27.♙f6 Black had to resign in the game Magerramov – Wedberg, Andorra 1993) 21.♙ad1 ♖b6 22.b3 ♖b8 23.♙a5!?± White is better thanks to the weakness of his opponent's d6-pawn and the powerful position of his own knight in the c6-outpost.

18.♙e4

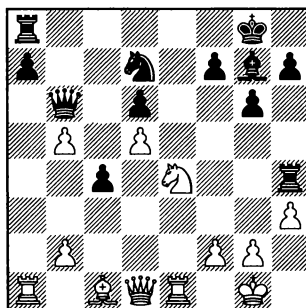
The position remains rather unclear after 18.♙f3?! ♖h5 19.g4 ♖xh3 20.♙g2 ♖xf3 21.♗xf3 ♙e5∞ P.Cramling – Wedberg, Stockholm 1995.



18...♗b6

After 18...♗b6, White's best move is 19.♙g5! (after 19.♙a6 ♖xe4! 20.♖xe4 ♙c5 21.♖xc4 ♗xb5= Black's position is quite playable; it is not appropriate for White to play here by analogy with the main line with 19.♗f3?! ♙e5 20.♙f6+ ♙h8 21.♖xe5 dxe5 22.g4 h6 – here it would also be interesting for Black to try 22...e4!? 23.♙xe4 f5 – 23.d6 ♗d8 24.b6∞; for example, 24...♙xf6 25.♖xa7 ♖b8 26.♖xf7 ♗xd6 27.

♖xf6 ♖xh3!; 27.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 28. ♖xf6 ♖xh3 29.♖xg6 ♖b3 30.♙e3 h5! 31.♖h6+ with a possible draw. Another possibility is 20.♗g3, which after 20...♖h5 21.♙f4 ♙d3 22.♙xd6! ♙xe1 23.♖xe1∞ enables White to obtain a very good game for the sacrificed exchange, but if Black responds accurately with 20...♖xe4! 21.♖xe4 ♗xb5±, he has good chances of obtaining an edge.) 19...♖xe4 (if 19...♖h5 20. h4!± Black's rook remains in seriously danger and after 20...♙e5 White has the powerful reply 21.b3!) 20.♖xe4 ♗xb5 21.♗e2!? ♙e5 (this is better than 21...♗xb2 22.♖e8+ ♖xe8 23.♗xe8+ ♙f8 24. ♖f1 c3 25.♗c6 ♙e5 26.♗c8±, since as well as being the exchange down, Black's back rank is very weak) 22.♙f4±



19.♗f3!

White has numerous interesting possibilities here, but it seems to me that only with ♗f3 can he retain chances of gaining a real advantage.

After 19.♙a6 ♗xb5 20.♖xd6,

with 20... ♖h5! (Black has tried in practice only 20... ♜e5?! and here the attractive-looking line 21. ♗g5 ♖h5 22. ♜f6+ ♗xf6 23. ♗xf6 ♜d3∞ Wu Shaobin – Bu Xiangzhi, Shenyang 1999, led to a very unclear position, whereas 21. ♜f6+! ♗xf6 22. ♖xf6 would have led to a difficult position for Black after either 22... ♜d3?! 23. ♖e7+- or 22... ♖e8 23. ♖f4±) he can rely on reaching equality – 21. ♗d2 ♜b6 (it is weaker for Black to play 21... ♗xd5 22. ♖f3↑ but he could also try 21... ♜c5!? 22. ♗c3 ♜xe4 23. ♖xe4 ♗xc3 24. bxc3 ♖e8∞) 22. ♗c3 ♖xd5 23. ♖f3 (or 23. ♖xd5!? ♖xd5 24. ♖f3) 23... ♖xd6 24. ♜xd6 ♖d5 25. ♜e4 ♖f5 26. ♖g3 ♜d5 27. ♗xg7 ♜xg7 28. ♜d6 ♖f4 29. ♖xf4 ♜xf4 30. ♖e7 ♖f8 31. ♖xa7 (or 31. ♜xc4 a6=) 31... c3 32. bxc3 ♜e2=

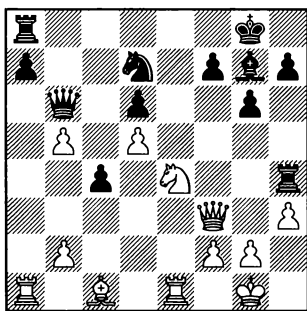
White can try to play in similar fashion to the variation we analyzed in our note to Black's move but 18 19. ♗g5 ♖h5 20. h4 is not so good for White here, in view of 20... ♜e5 21. g4 (with the black queen on the b8-square, it would be good for White to continue with 21. b3 but here it would not achieve anything substantial after 21... ♜d3, for example: 22. ♖e2 h6!? 23. g4 hxg5 24. gxh5 f5=; 23. ♜f6 ♗xf6 24. ♗xf6 ♖xb5 25. bxc4 ♖xc4 26. ♖xa7 ♖f8 and Black is close to equality) 21... ♜xg4 (also playable is 21... ♖xg5!? 22. hxg5 ♜d3∞) 22. ♖xg4 f5 23. ♖h3!? (23. ♖e2 fxe4∞) 23... fxe4 24. ♖e6+ ♜h8 25. ♖e7 ♖f8 26. ♖e2 ♖d4 27.

♖d2 ♖xg5! 28. ♖xg5 ♖c5 29. ♖e7 ♖c8! 30. ♖e6 ♖c5 31. ♖xe4 ♗e5 (intending ♖f4) 32. ♖e3 c3=

White fails to achieve anything with the alternatives to the move 20. h4, for example: 20. ♖f3? f5+; 20. ♖e2 ♗e5=; 20. ♗e3 ♖xb5 21. ♜xd6 ♖xd5=; 20. ♖e2 ♜e5 21. ♖a6 ♖xb5 22. ♖ea1 ♖b8 23. ♗f6 ♜d3 24. ♖1a5 (24. ♖e3 ♖e5∞) 24... ♖e8 25. ♖xa7 ♖f5 26. ♖e7 ♖d8 27. ♗xg7 ♜xg7 28. ♖aa7 ♖xb2 29. ♖e3 ♖b6 30. ♜g3 ♖xe3 31. ♜xf5+ gxf5 32. ♖xf7+ ♜g6 33. fxe3 c3=

White has another possibility in 19. ♗e3, for example: 19... ♖xb5 (for 19... ♖b8 20. ♗g5 – see 18... ♖b8 19. ♗g5) 20. ♜xd6 ♖b3 (capturing the pawn with 20... ♖xb2? loses for Black after 21. ♖a4! no matter where his knight retreats: 21... ♜e5 22. ♖ab1 ♖c3 23. f4!? ♜d3 24. ♜e4 ♖xe1+ 25. ♖xe1 ♜xe1 26. ♖xc4+-, or 21... ♜f6 22. ♗g5 ♖h5 23. ♖c6 ♖f8 24. ♜xc4 ♖b3 25. ♖ab1+-, 22... ♖d4 23. ♖ab1 ♖c3 24. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 25. ♖e8+-; however, on move 20, besides the retreat of the queen to the b3-square, Black can play 20... ♖b8 21. ♜xf7! ♜xf7 22. d6 ♖h5 23. ♖g4 ♖b7 24. ♗g5↑, but then White has dangerous initiative which more than compensates for the sacrificed material) 21. g3 (21. ♗g5!? ♖d4 22. ♖e2 ♖xd5 23. ♜xf7 ♜e5 24. ♜h6+ ♗xh6 25. ♗xh6 ♖d3± – after the exchange of queens Black has good drawing chances. White's other possibility here is 21. ♖xa7 ♖xa7 22. ♗xa7 ♖xd1 23. ♖xd1 ♗xb2 24. g3 which

would be justified after 24...
 ♖xh3?! 25.♟xc4±, but after 24...
 c3! 25.gxh4 c2 26.♞e1 c1♞ 27.♞xc1
 ♟xc1 28.♟d4, despite his extra
 pawn, White's winning chances in
 this endgame are highly problem-
 atic, for example: 28...♟f4 29.♟c4
 f5 30.♟g2 ♟f7 31.♟f3 ♟h2) 21...
 ♞h5 22.g4 ♞e5 (if 22...♞xh3 23.
 ♞xb3 cxb3 24.♟g2± Black's rook
 is terribly misplaced) 23.♞c1 ♞xd1
 24.♞cxd1 ♟f6 25.♟xc4 ♞xd5. Nat-
 urally, White maintains a slight
 edge, but he if his opponent plays
 precisely he will find it hard to
 achieve anything real. 26.♞a1 (26.
 g5 ♞xd1 27.♞xd1 ♟e4 28.♞d7 a6
 29.♞e7 f5 30.f3 ♟f8 31.♞c7 ♟d6
 32.♟b6 ♞b8 33.♟d5 ♟e8 34.♟f6+
 ♟xf6 35.gxf6 ♞d8=) 26...♞b5 27.
 ♞xa7 ♞xa7 28.♟xa7 h5!? White
 has still an extra pawn, but his
 winning chances are only mini-
 mal.



19...♟e5

19...♞h5 20.g4 (or 20.♞d1!?
 with the same ideas) 20...♞e5 21.
 ♟e3 ♞c7 (21...♞xb5? 22.♞xf7!±;
 21...♞b8 22.♞a6↑) 22.♞a6↑ f5 23.
 gxf5!? ♞f5 24.♞e2 ♟e5 25.♞xa7

♟f3+ 26.♟f1! ♞xa7 27.b6 ♞e7 28.
 bxa7 ♞xe4 29.a8♞+ ♞f8 30.♞a1!±

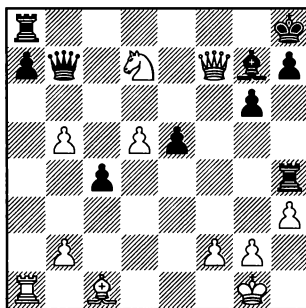
20.♟f6+! ♟h8

This move is forced, because
 20...♟f8?? 21.♞xe5 dxe5 22.
 ♟d7+– leads to the loss of the
 Black's queen.

21.♞xe5 dxe5 22.♟d7 ♞b7

After 22...♞xb5 23.♞xf7± is
 once again very strong.

23.♞xf7



23...♞h5

23...♞d4? 24.♟e3 ♞xd5 25.
 ♞xa7! ♞d1+ 26.♟h2 ♞c8. Now
 White he has a spectacular way to
 win: 27.♟h6!! ♟xh6 28.♞xh7+!
 ♟xh7 29.♟f6+ ♟h8 30.♞h7#

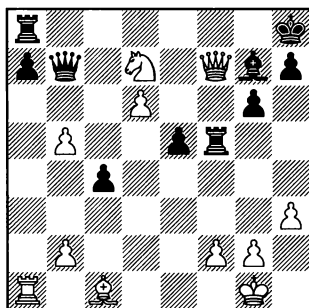
24.d6 ♞f5

Black loses after 24...♞xb5??
 25.♞xa7! ♞xa7 26.♞e8+–

In the variation 24...e4 25.♟e3
 ♞f5 (25...♞xb5? 26.♞xa7!+–) 26.
 ♞e6 ♞xb5 (it is no better to play
 26...♞d5 27.♞xd5 ♞xd5 28.b6
 ♞xd6 29.b7 ♞d8 30.b8♞ ♞xb8
 31.♟xb8 ♟xb2 32.♞a5 with the
 idea of ♞c5+–) 27.g4 ♞xb2 and
 again White wins with the tactical

9.♟f3 ♖e8 10.0-0 c4 11.♙c2 b5 12.♟xb5 ♜xe4 13.♙xe4 ♖xe4

shot 28.♙xa7!, because after 28... ♖g8 29.gxf5 gxf5 30.♟h2! f4 he has the problem-like move 31. ♙a2!! ♖xa2 32.♜e5 (31...♖c3 32. ♙xf4+-) 32...♖f8 (32...♙xe5 33. ♖xe5+ ♖g7 34.♖e8+ ♖g8 35. ♙d4#) 33.♜xf7+ ♖xf7 (33...♟g8 34.♜h6+ ♟h8 35.♖g8+ ♖xg8 36. ♜f7#) 34.♖xf7 h6 35.d7 fxe3 36.d8♖+ ♟h7 37.♖dg8#



25.♖e7

With 25.♖e6 White has been less successful in practice: 25... ♖xb5 26.♙e3 ♖xb2 27.♙a4! (it is not inferior to continue with 27. ♙xa7 ♙xa7 28.♖e8+ ♙f8 29.♜xf8, owing to 29...♖a1+! 30.♟h2 ♙a8 31.♜xg6+ ♟g7 32.♖e7+ ♖f7 33. ♖g5 hxg6 34.♖h6+ ♟g8 35. ♖xg6= and White has nothing more than perpetual check) 27... e4 (it is too risky for Black to play 27...c3?! here, on account of 28. ♙h4! and White's attack is very strong) 28.♙xc4 ♙d8 29.♖e7 ♖g8 30.♖xe4= – White has a pawn for the exchange and maintains the initiative, but Black's position seems defensible.

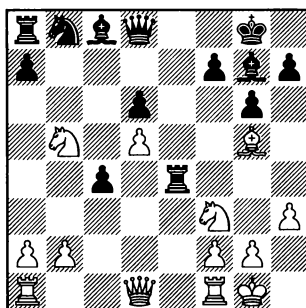
25...e4 26.♙e3 h5

26...♖d5? 27.b6! axb6 28.♙xa8 ♖xa8 29.g4 ♙a5 30.♙g5! e3 31. ♙f6+-

27.♖e6 ♖xb5 (27...♙xb2 28.♙d1±) 28.g4 ♙d5 29.♟g2!±

D3b) 14.♙g5!?

White plays in a quiet positional manner.



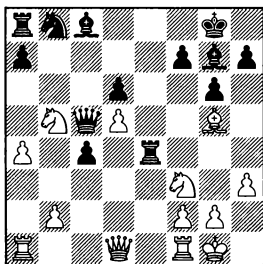
14...f6

White gains a clear advantage after 14...♖d7 15.♖c2! ♖e8 16. ♖xc4 ♙a6 17.a4± Barsov – Saraukauskas, France 2004.

After 14...♖b6 15.a4 Black loses, even with his relatively best defence 15...♖c5 (15...h6? 16. ♜d2+-; 15...♙e8 16.♜d2 ♖c5 17. ♜xc4 ♖xc4 18.♜xd6 ♖c7 19.♜xe8 ♖e5 20.♜xg7 ♖xg5 21.♜e8 1-0 I.Novikov – Shahade, New York 2001; 15...a6 16.♜d2 axb5 17.♜xe4 ♙xb2 18.♙b1 bxa4 19.♜f6+ ♟g7 20.♖e2 a3 21.♖e8+- Schreck – Konietzka, Ruhrgebiet 2004; it is bad to play 15...♙f5, because of 16.♜d2 and now after 16...♙xb2 17.♙b1 ♙g7 18.♜c3+- or 16...a6

Chapter 6

17. ♖xe4 ♙xe4 18. ♜e2 axb5 19. ♜xe4 ♜d7 20. axb5+— Black's position is hopeless, Bronznik – Klundt, Austria 2002.)



16. ♖c1! (White loses almost all his advantage after 16. ♖e1? ♜xe1+ 17. ♜xe1 ♜a6 18. ♜e8+ ♙f8 19. ♖e1 ♙b7 20. ♙h6 ♜c8 21. ♜xc8 ♜xc8 22. ♙xf8 ♜xf8 23. ♜e7± Simonenko – Senador, Manila 1992.) 16... ♙b7 (or 16... ♙a6 17. ♜d2 ♜e8 18. ♙e3 ♜xe3 19. ♜xc4 ♜b6 20. fxg3 ♜d7 21. ♜e2+— and Black has no compensation whatsoever for the exchange) 17. b4! ♜xb4 18. ♜d2 ♜e5 19. ♜xc4 ♜a5 20. ♜f3 ♜xd5 (20... ♜e8 21. ♜xd6+—) 21. ♖c8+! ♙f8 22. ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 23. ♜a1+—

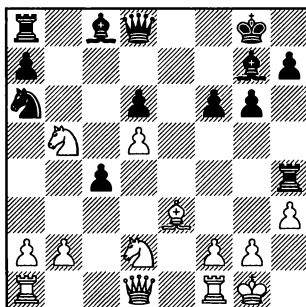
15. ♙e3

After the more or less forced weakening of Black's kingside pawn structure his position is clearly worse.

15... ♜a6

His position is also very difficult after 15... ♜d7 16. ♜c3 ♜e8 17. ♜d2 ♜a6 (17... ♙a6 18. ♙d4±) 18. ♜xc4 ♜c5 19. b4 (19. ♙xc5 dxc5 20. ♜a4!±) 19... ♜e4 20. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 21. ♖c1 ♙a6 22. ♜b3±

16. ♜d2 ♜h4



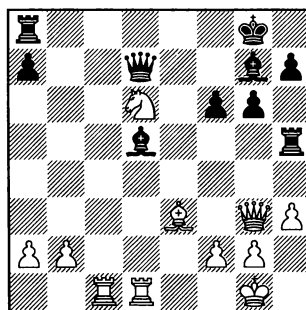
17. ♜f3!?

This move is White's best way to emphasize the awkward position of his opponent's rook.

17... ♜c7

Black also loses a pawn in the variation 17... ♜d7 18. ♜g3 ♜h5 19. a4±

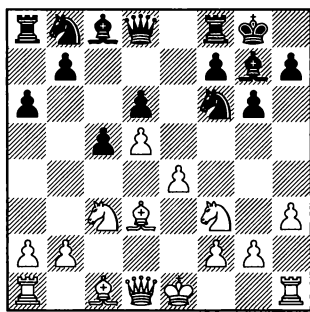
18. ♜xc7 ♜xc7 19. ♜ac1 ♙b7 20. ♜g3 ♜h5 21. ♜xc4 ♜d7 22. ♜xd6 ♙xd5 23. ♜fd1±



White has an extra pawn and his pieces are very active. Black will find it difficult to utilise his advantage of the bishop pair because his pieces are very passive.

Chapter 7

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0-0 9.♘f3 a6



Black hopes to seize the initiative, but he has problems with the development of his queenside pieces. In general, the variation with 9...a6 leads to a complex positional struggle in which White's prospects are slightly better, thanks to his space advantage.

10.a4!

In his fight for an opening edge, this is White's most popular and probably best move. He hinders Black's queenside counterplay based on b7-b5.

The other possibilities for White, 10.0-0 and 10.♙f4, are only rarely encountered in practice, since then Black simply plays his thematic advance in such po-

sitions – 10...b5!?, gaining good counterplay.

Now Black has many options: **A) 10...h6**, **B) 10...♖c7**, **C) 10...♘h5** and **D) 10...♘fd7** are played relatively rarely, while **E) 10...♞e8** and **10...♘bd7** (Chapter 8) are his most solid and are frequently encountered.

For 10...♖e7 11.0-0 ♘bd7 – see Chapter 8, variation **A**.

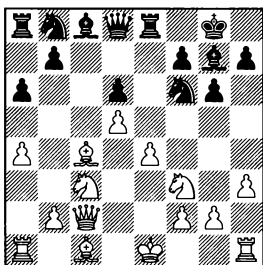
I should also like to mention briefly some very rarely played moves:

10...b6 11.0-0 ♞a7?! – with the idea of transferring the rook to the e7-square (for 11...♘bd7 12.♞e1 – see Chapter 8, variation **B**; 11...♞e8 12.♞e1 – see 10...♞e8) 12.♙f4 ♞e7 13.♘d2!?± and with the threat of ♘c4 permanently hanging over him, Black has a prospectless position.

10...c4 (this move is usually played only after 10...♞e8 11.0-0) 11.♙xc4!? This is White's simplest way to fight for an opening advantage. (11.♙c2 ♞e8!? 12.0-0 – see variation **E**) 11...♞e8 (11...♘xe4?!

Chapter 7

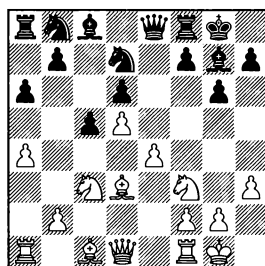
12. ♖xe4 ♜e8 13. ♘fd2!? f5 14. ♙e2
fxe4 15. ♘c4±) 12. ♛c2!?



12...♙f5 (the essence of the position remains the same after 12... ♖xe4 13. ♖xe4 ♙f5 14. ♙d3 ♙xe4 15. ♙xe4 f5 16. ♘g5↑, or 13...f5?! 14. ♘fg5±) 13. ♙d3 ♖xe4 14. ♖xe4 ♙xe4 15. ♙xe4 f5 16. ♘g5 fxe4 (16... ♛a5+?! 17. b4!? ♛xb4+ 18. ♙d2 ♛d4 19. 0-0 fxe4 20. ♙e3 with a clear advantage for White. Now 20...♛xd5 is bad in view of 21. ♛ad1+–) 17. ♖e6±. This position arises after 11. ♙c4!? almost by force and the strong position of White's knight on e6 guarantees him a considerable advantage. For example, he can answer 17... ♛a5+, with 18. b4!? (18. ♛d2 ♛xd2+ 19. ♙xd2± leads to a slightly better endgame) 18...♛xd5 (18...♛xb4+? 19. ♙d2 ♛b2 20. ♛xb2 ♙xb2 21. ♛b1+–) 19. ♖xg7 ♖xg7 20. ♙b2+ ♖g8 21. ♛c7 ♛f7 22. ♛c3 ♖f8 23. 0-0↑ with a dangerous initiative for White. Black's extra pawn does not compensate for the weakness of the dark squares on the kingside.

10...♛e8 – This move does not deserve serious attention, but it

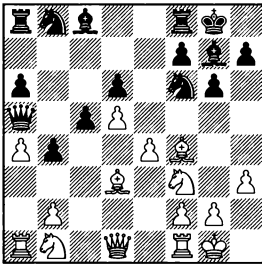
contains a tricky tactical idea. 11. 0-0 (if 11. ♙f4?! Black has the tactical shot 11...♖xe4! 12. 0-0 ♖xc3 13. bxc3 ♛d8, reaching an approximately equal position; if 12. ♖xe4? f5+–) 11...♖fd7 (after the more natural-looking move 11... ♖bd7 12. ♙f4, Black will have to play 12...♛e7, transposing to another familiar position, but a tempo down, i.e. 10...♛e7 11. 0-0 ♖bd7 12. ♙f4, which, of course, cannot be satisfactory for him. It is even worse for Black to play 12...♖e5?!, because of 13. ♖xe5 dxe5 14. ♙e3± with a clear advantage for White after 14...♛e7 15. a5, or 14...♖d7 15. a5)



12. ♙f4 (here the waiting move 12. ♙c2 deserves consideration, with the idea of answering the attractive-looking 12...♖e5 with 13. ♖d2!↑, threatening f2-f4. Then 13...g5 does not help, because after 14. ♖f3! h6 15. ♖xe5, Black has the rather unpleasant choice between 15...♙xe5?! 16. f4 gxf4 17. ♙xf4 f6 18. ♛d2 and 15...♛xe5 16. f4 ♛d4+ 17. ♖h1 ♛xd1 18. ♖xd1! and White retains a clear positional advantage in both cases; if 14...♖xf3+ 15. ♛xf3 ♛e5 16. ♛h5±;

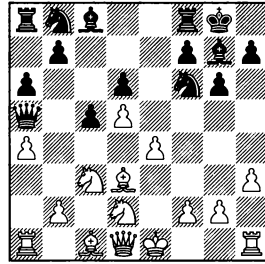
or if earlier 12... ♖e7 13. ♗g5↑) 12... ♖e5 13. ♖xe5 ♗xe5 14. ♗h6 ♗g7 15. ♗xg7 ♖xg7 16. f4 ♖d7 17. ♖d2↑ – White has a stable positional advantage and the initiative, Lóbron – Armas, Germany 1991.

10... ♖a5?! – The early sortie of Black's queen to a5 is not in the spirit of the position, since it has nothing to do there in such pawn structures. Even if he manages to carry out the idea behind 10... ♖a5, which is to answer 11. 0–0!? with the advance 11... b5, then after 12. ♗f4 b4 13. ♖b1±, with the plan of ♖bd2 and ♖c4,



Black will still have problems: 13... ♖c7 (13... c4?! 14. ♗xc4 ♖xe4 15. ♖bd2 ♖xd2 16. ♖xd2±; 15... ♖c7 16. ♖xe4 ♖xc4 17. ♖fg5!±) 14. ♖bd2!? (White keeps a stable edge after 14. ♖c2) 14... ♖h5 15. ♗h2 ♗xb2 16. ♖c4 ♗xa1 17. ♗xa1↑ – he has the initiative and more than sufficient compensation for the exchange, since it is bad for Black to play 17... ♗d8?! because of 18. ♖xd6 ♗xd6 (18... ♖e7 19. e5±) 19. ♖e5± c4?! 20. ♗xc4 ♖xc4? 21. ♖e8+ ♖g7 22. ♗xd6 ♖d7 23. ♖e5+–

However, after 10... ♖a5, White's simplest reply would be the immediate 11. ♖d2, preventing b5,



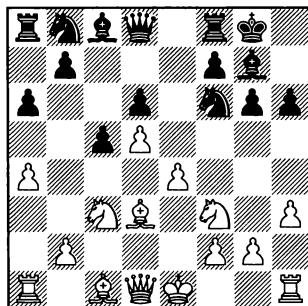
for example 11... b5? 12. axb5 ♖xa1 13. ♖b3+–; or if 11... ♖bd7 12. ♖c4 ♖c7 (12... ♖b4? 13. 0–0+– with the idea of trapping Black's queen with ♖a2) 13. ♗f4 ♖e5 (13... ♖e8 14. 0–0±) 14. ♗xe5 dxe5 15. a5± White maintains a slight but stable advantage thanks to his extra space and rather better piece coordination.

10... ♖e8 Black wants to advance f7–f5, but this active plan is not really very good in view of his lagging queenside development. 11. 0–0 f5?! 12. exf5!? (12. ♖g5 ♖c7 13. exf5 ♗xf5 14. ♗c4↑) 12... ♗xf5 13. ♗g5!? ♖c8! (13... ♖c7?! 14. ♗e1±; 13... ♖b6?! 14. ♗xf5 ♗xf5 15. ♖e2±) 14. ♗e1± and White has a huge lead in development, Lorscheid – Meyer, Stuttgart 1993. Black's relatively best move is 11... ♖d7, but then the move 10... ♖e8 does not seem very logical. After 12. ♗g5!? ♗f6 (12... ♖b6 13. ♖d2↑ intending a5) 13. ♗h6 ♗g7 (13... ♖g7 14. ♗e2!?±) 14. ♖d2± White

Chapter 7

again has a slight but stable positional advantage thanks to his extra space and better piece coordination.

A) 10...h6



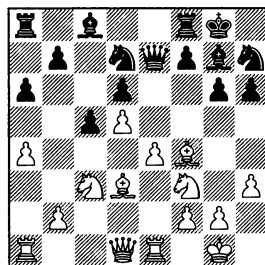
This move is not in the spirit of the position, because it does not contribute to the development of his queenside and, more importantly, it does nothing to impede White's basic plan in this variation: f4 and 0-0, followed by fe1 .

11. $\text{f4!?$,

This is the simplest. He prevents bd7 and maintains a stable positional advantage.

11... e8

11... e7 12.0-0 bd7 13. $\text{e1!?$ (13. $\text{h2!?$ g5 14. e1 g4 15. h4 e5 16. f5 xf5 17. exf5 ↑ Ipatov – Garcia, Barbera 2009) 13... h7 (13... h5 14. h2 e5 15. $\text{e2!?$ ±; 13... e8 14. a5 ↑; 14. $\text{d2!?$ g5 15. g3 e5 16. dxe5 xe5 17. dxe5 xe5 18. $\text{d1!?$ ± with the plan of e3 и d4)



14. d2! g5 15. e3 dxe5 (15... d8?! 16. $\text{a5}\pm$ dhf8 17. d4 dg6 18. $\text{e3!?$ dde5 19. dxe5 dxe5 20. db6 b8 21. $\text{b4}\pm$; 19... dxe5 20. dxe5 dxe5 21. db6 b8 22. b4 cxb4 23. dxb4 f6 24. $\text{c3!?$ e7 25. f1 d7 26. e1 dxe5 27. e1 f6 28. g3 e8 29. $\text{e7}\pm$ Browne – De Firmian, Reno 1993) 16. dxe5 dxe5 17. dxe5 dxe5 18. $\text{db1!?$ White is threatening the manoeuvre d3-c4 , with a stable and quite substantial positional advantage. 18... d7 19. a5! (19. d3?! b5! 20. axb5 axb5 21. dxb5 e3) 19... e3 20. d3 d4 21. c3! f8 22. e1 dxc3 (22... b5? 23. axb6 e3 24. d4+-) 23. bxc3 d6 24. f1 c7 25. d4 dxe8 26. b1 d8 (26... b5 27. $\text{d3}\pm$) 27. b6 Black is in a powerful positional bind and his position is strategically lost, Chernin – Lohbron, Dortmund 1990.

12.0-0

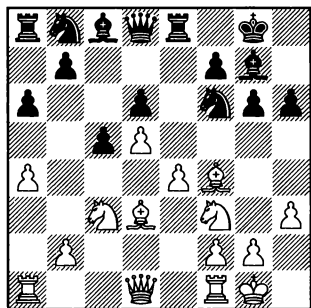
(diagram)

White has a big positional advantage and there is no promising plan for Black in sight.

12...g5

12... e7 13. d2 ↑

After 12... h5 13. h2 White again preserves his considerable



positional edge. 13... ♖f6 (13... ♖c7 14. ♖d2 ♖d7 15. ♖e2±) 14. ♖d2!? g5 (14... ♖xh3?! 15. e5! dxe5 16. ♖e4 ♖f5 17. ♖e3!± with the idea of answering 17... ♖g4 with 18. ♖e1±, while after 17... ♖f4?! 18. ♖xf4 exf4 19. ♖f6 White gains a winning position: 14... ♖d7 15. ♖e2!? ♖e7 16. ♖ae1↑ and here after 16... ♖b8 17. ♖c1!?± with the plan of ♖d2!?, White maintains an enduring initiative) 15. e5!? dxe5 16. ♖fe1 ♖d7 17. ♖e4 ♖e7 (17... ♖d8 18. ♖d6 ♖f8 19. ♖f5±; 17... ♖b6 18. a5 ♖c7 19. ♖ac1↑; 19. d6!? ♖d8 20. ♖c4±) 18. d6 ♖d8 19. ♖c3±

13. ♖h2 g4 14. ♖d2

Now the position becomes much sharper.

14. hxc4!? ♖xc4 (14... ♖xc4 15. ♖g3↑) 15. ♖e1 ♖h5?! 16. ♖e2! ♖d7 17. ♖d2 ♖xe2 18. ♖xe2 ♖g5 19. ♖xd6± Black has no compensation for the pawn whatsoever, Parker – Quillan, England 1997.

14... gxc3 15. ♖c4 ♖g4!?

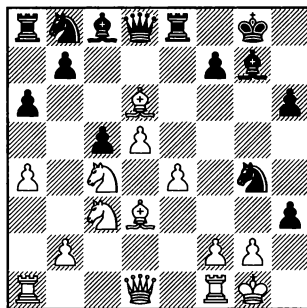
15... ♖f8 16. ♖f3±

15... hxc2 16. ♖xc2 ♖g4 17. ♖xd6 h5 18. ♖h1±

16. ♖xd6

(diagram)

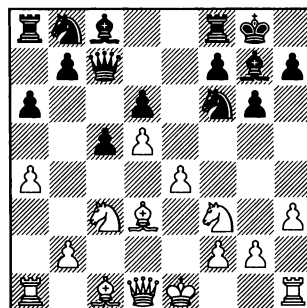
White has a great advantage,



thanks to the lagging development of Black's queenside.

16... ♖e5 (16... hxc2 17. ♖xc2 h5 18. ♖h1±; 17... ♖e5 18. ♖xe5! ♖xe5 19. f4 ♖g7 20. e5+–) 17. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 18. ♖xe5 hxc2 19. ♖xc2 ♖g5+!? (19... ♖xe5? 20. f4 ♖h4 21. ♖f3 ♖h5 22. ♖g3+ ♖h8 23. ♖xh5!? ♖xh5 24. ♖h1 ♖xh1+ 25. ♖xh1+–) 20. ♖f3 ♖xe5 (20... ♖f6+ 21. ♖e3 ♖xe5 22. ♖h1 ♖d4+ 23. ♖e2+–) 21. ♖h1± – The position of White's king on f3 is much safer than the position of its counterpart on g8. In addition, Black lags a long way behind in the development of his queenside.

B) 10... ♖c7



Black determines the position

Chapter 7

of his queen a bit too early.

11.0–0 c4

For 11...♖bd7 12.♞e1 ♞e8, or 11...♞e8 12.♞e1!? ♖bd7 – see Chapter 8, variation E4.

The move 11...b6 has been played here, which seems rather passive. If Black wants to play the set-up with b7–b6, it is better play it immediately on move 10 (10...b6), without the inclusion of ♜d8–c7. 12.♙f4 (it is also interesting for White to try the standard move 12.♖d2↑ intending ♖c4) 12...♖bd7 13.♞e1± – White has a stable edge in view of his extra space and better piece coordination. We have analysed similar positions in the variation 9.♖f3 a6 10.a4 b6.

12.♙e2!?

This move enables White to keep an eye on the enemy c4-pawn and he is now threatening the manoeuvre ♙e3, followed by ♖d2, winning a pawn. This seems more active than 12.♙c2, although even then White retains a stable edge: 12...♖bd7 13.♙f4±; 12...♞e8 13.♙f4±

12...♖bd7

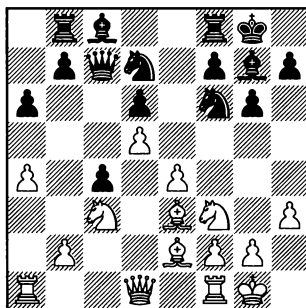
The character of the position remains the same after 12...♞e8, since after 13.♞c2 ♖bd7 14.♙e3! (planning ♖d2), Black will still have serious problems to worry about.

13.♙e3!?

This is a simple and strong move, with the plan of ♖d2. Losing the c4-pawn becomes a very unpleasant problem for Black.

13...♞b8

After 13...♞e8 14.♖d2 ♖c5 (14...♖e5 15.a5 ♞b8 16.♞c2±) 15.♞c2, Black has nothing better than to go into the forcing line 15...♖b3 (it is even worse to play 15...♙d7?!, since after 16.♙xc4 ♞ac8 17.♞fc1!?± Black has no compensation for the pawn, because 17...♖cx4? 18.♖cx4 ♖xe4 19.♖xe4 b5 20.axb5 axb5 fails to 21.♙d3+–, while 17...♖xa4? 18.♖xa4 b5 loses to 19.♖b6+–) 16.♖xb3 cxb3 17.♞xb3 ♖xe4 18.♖xe4 ♞xe4 19.♙d3±; or 19.♙b6± and White maintains a considerable positional advantage, thanks to his lead in development.



14.♞c2!?

This is the most precise move.

White can also keep a stable edge by employing a standard manoeuvre for such positions: 14.♙a7 ♞a8 15.♙d4↑

It is a bit premature to play 14.♖d2, which runs into 14...b5, for example: 15.axb5 axb5 16.♞a7 ♞d8 17.♞c2 (17.b4?! ♖g4!=) 17...

♖c5!? (for 17... ♖e8?! 18. b4± see 14. ♖c2) 18. b4 (18. e5 ♖f5 19. ♖d1 ♖fe4 20. ♖cxe4 ♖xe4 and Black is no worse) 18... cxb3 19. ♖xb3 ♖xb3 20. ♖xb3 b4!? with the idea of answering 21. ♖a4 with 21... ♖f5!?=

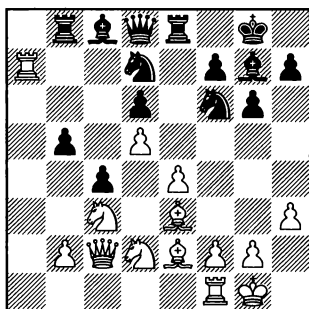
14... ♖e8

It is unsound for Black to play 14... b5?, because of 15. axb5 axb5 16. ♖a7 ♖d8 17. ♖d4+—

15. ♖d2!? b5

After 15... ♖c5 16. ♖xc4± Black has no compensation for the pawn whatsoever.

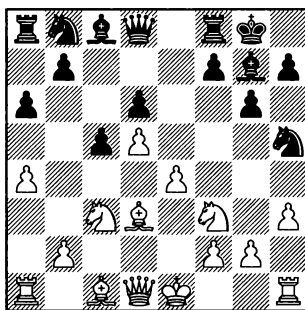
16. axb5 axb5 17. ♖a7 ♖d8



18. b4!± Now Black, to avoid a complete positional bind, is almost forced to play **18... cxb3**, but after **19. ♖xb3 b4 20. ♖a5!? ♖c5** (20... bxc3 21. ♖c6 ♖b2 22. ♖d1!? ♖xe4 23. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24. ♖c1!?±) **21. ♖c6 ♖b6 22. ♖a4 ♖xa7 23. ♖xa7 b3 24. ♖c1 ♖xa4 25. ♖c7 ♖d7 26. ♖d3 b2 27. ♖c2!±** despite the fact that the position remains very sharp, White has clearly the better chances and Black's compensation for the queen is insufficient. **27... h5** (27... ♖ed8 28. ♖c4!?±)

28. ♖d4 (28. ♖c4?! ♖xe4! 29. ♖xe4 ♖c3∞) **28... ♖c5** (28... ♖ed8?! 29. ♖c4+—) **29. ♖xc5 dxc5 30. e5 ♖f5 31. exf6!** (31. ♖xf5?! ♖xd5 32. ♖xc5 gxf5 33. ♖b1! ♖xe5!? 34. ♖c6 ♖c8 35. ♖xb2 ♖e1+ 36. ♖h2 ♖xb2 37. ♖xd5 ♖e6 38. ♖d4 ♖xd4 39. ♖xd4 ♖c2=.) White loses after the attractive-looking line: 33. ♖xd5? b1♖ 34. ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 35. ♖h2 ♖xe5+ 36. g3 h4 37. ♖g2 hxg3 38. fxg3 ♖f6—+) **31... ♖xc2 32. fxg7 b1♖ 33. ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 34. ♖h2±**

C) 10... ♖h5



11. ♖g5!?

This is the only plan in which White postpones kingside castling and it is the only way to reach original positions. After 11. 0–0 ♖d7, there is a transposition to Chapter 8.

11... ♖f6!

This is considered to be the best move for Black and quite deservedly so.

It is too passive for him to play 11... ♖c7, because after 12. 0–0

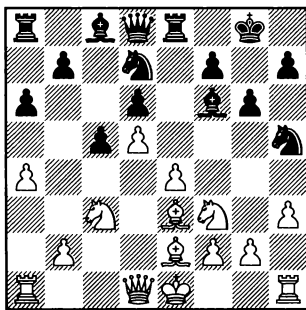
♖d7 13.♙e2!? (planning ♖d2) Black's position is prospectless and he has no decent plan for active counterplay. 13...♞e8 14.♖d2!? ♖hf6 (14...h6 15.♙e3 ♖hf6 16.a5!) 15.a5!? (15.♙f4±) 15...b5 16.axb6 ♞xb6 17.♞c2 ♞b8?! 18.♞a2±; 18.♞fb1±

12.♙e3!? ♖d7

12...♞e8 13.0-0 ♖d7 14.♞e1 – see 9.♖f3 a6 10.a4 ♖bd7 11.0-0 ♞e8 12.♞e1 ♖h5 13.♙g5 ♙f6 14.♙e3.

13.♙e2!? ♞e8

13...♞e7 14.♖d2± ♙d4?! (14...♖g7 15.0-0±) 15.♙xh5 ♙xe3 16.fxe3 ♞h4+ 17.g3 ♞xg3+ 18.♖e2 ♞g2+ 19.♖d3 ♖e5+ 20.♖c2 ♞g5 21.♙e2 ♞xe3 22.♞g1 Black's compensation for the piece is insufficient, Vainerman – Homyakov, Simferopol 1991.

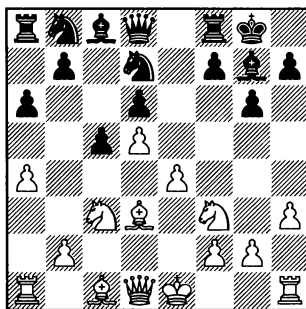


14.♖d2!?

White has a stable positional advantage. 14...♙d4? (Black has to continue here with 14...♖g7, and after 15.0-0, he retains a very passive but still defensible position) 15.♙xh5 ♙xe3 16.fxe3 ♞h4+ 17.g3 ♞xg3?! (17...♞xh5 18.♞xh5

gxf5 19.♖c4 ♖e5 20.♖xd6 ♞d8 21.♖xc8 ♞axc8 22.♞f1±) 18.♖e2 ♞g2+ 19.♖d3 ♖e5+ 20.♖c2 ♞g5 21.♙e2 ♞xe3 22.♞g1! ♞d4 23.♞xd4 (23.h4!±) 23...cxd4 24.♖d1 f5 25.♖f2 ♙d7 26.♖b3 ♖g7 27.♞ac1± and Black does not have enough compensation for the piece, Ivanchuk – Yudasin, Riga 1991.

D) 10...♖fd7

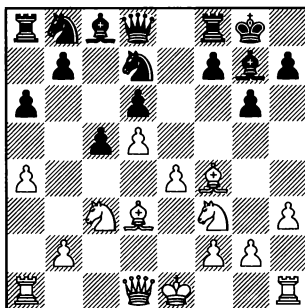
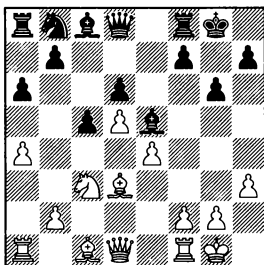


The basic drawback of this move is that Black reveals his plan too early. Now in the near future he will have to play ♖d7-e5, otherwise, he will have great difficulty in developing his queenside.

11.♙f4!?

This is White's simplest way to fight for an opening advantage. He immediately attacks the enemy d6-pawn and invites his opponent to clarify the position.

11.0-0 ♖e5 12.♖xe5 ♙xe5 leads to a much more complicated game in which Black has many more chances of creating counterplay,



for example:

the immediate 13.f4, can be met by 13...♗d4+ 14.♖h1 (14.♖h2 ♗d7∞) 14...♗h4 15.♗f3 ♗d7∞ leading to a complex and very unclear position;

after 13.♗h6, Black has at his disposal an interesting riposte 13...♗h3!?, with very good counterplay for the exchange after 14.♗f3 ♗c8!? 15.♗xf8 ♗xf8, while the lines: 14.gxh3 ♗h4 15.♗d2 ♗xh3 16.f3 ♗d4+ 17.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 18.♗xe3 ♗g3+ 19.♖h1 ♗h3+, or 14.♗d2 ♗h4 15.♗g5 ♗h5 16.gxh3 ♗xh3 17.f3 ♗d4+ 18.♗e3 ♗xe3+ 19.♗xe3 ♗g3+ 20.♖h1 ♗h3+ 21.♖g1 ♗g3+ and 14.♗e2 ♗g4 15.♗xf8 ♗h4 16.g3 ♗h3 17.f3 ♗xg3 18.♗xg3 ♗xg3+ all lead to perpetual check;

it would be safer for White to continue with 13.♗e3!?, not allowing Black's bishop to the d4-square. Then after 13...♗d7 or 13...b6, very complicated positions arise, in which White's prospects are slightly better.

(diagram)

11...♗e7

11...♗e8 12.0-0 (12.♗xd6? ♗b6-+) 12...♗e5 13.♗xe5 ♗xe5

14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 (14...dxe5?! 15.a5 ♗d6 16.♗a4 ♗d7 17.♗c2+- Xu Jun – Sursock, Novi Sad 1990) 15.f4 ♗e8 16.♗d2↑ Black is clearly worse and White is threatening to improve his position with ♗ae1, planning the pawn-break e4-e5, for example: 16...♗d7 17.♗ae1 f6?! 18.e5! fxe5 19.f5±, or 18...dxe5 19.d6 ♗b6 20.♗c4+ ♖g7 21.♗d5+-

12.0-0 ♗e5 13.♗xe5 ♗xe5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5

This is the basic position of the 10...♗fd7 variation. Black lags behind in the development of his queenside and his kingside has been weakened by the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. These factors add up to a considerable positional advantage to White.

15.f4!?

This is the most energetic move.

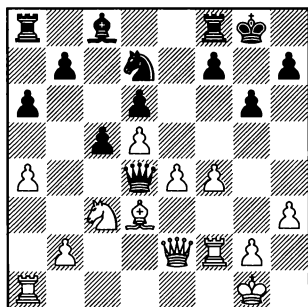
15...♗d4+ 16.♗f2!?

16.♖h2±

16...♗d7

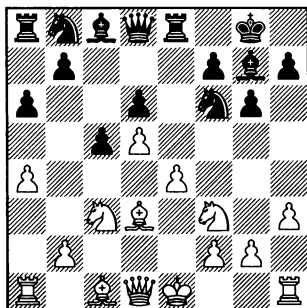
White also maintains an edge after 16...c4 17.♗f1 ♗c5 18.e5±, or 17...♗xd1 18.♗xd1±

17. ♖e2↑



White has the initiative and after ♖d1 the threat of the pawn break e4-e5 will always be hanging over Black's head, for example: 17...f6 18.♖d1 (18.h4!?) 18...♗b4 19.h4 ♖b6 20.a5 ♖a4 (20...♗xa5?! 21.e5±) 21.♘xa4 ♗xa4 22.h5!? White's initiative is very dangerous, thanks to his permanent threat of the break e4-e5. Now after 22...♔g7 he can play 23.♙c2 ♗b4 (23...♗xa5?! 24.e5±) 24.♗f3 ♙d7 25.♗g3, maintaining powerful positional pressure.

E) 10...♙e8



Along with 10...♖bd7, this is one of Black's most popular moves, but it leads to only a few independent positions, since in the main line after 11.0-0 Black usually responds with 11...♖bd7, which we analyze in variation E Chapter 8.

11.0-0 c4

For 11...h6 12.♙f4 – see variation A; for 11...♖fd7 12.♙f4 – see variation D.

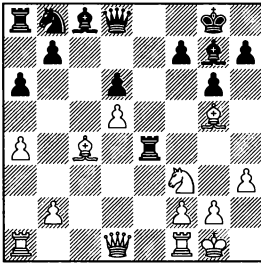
The positions arising after 11...♖bd7 12.♙e1, or 11...♖h5 12.♙g5 ♙f6 (12...♗c7 13.♙e1 ♖d7) 13.♙e3 ♖d7 14.♙e1, or 11...♗c7 12.♙e1 ♖bd7, or 11...♗e7 12.♙e1 ♖bd7 are dealt with in Chapter 8.

After 11...b6, it looks very good for White to play 12.♙e1! with the idea of not hurrying to develop the dark-squared bishop to f4 (the immediate 12.♙f4 is neither better nor worse than 12.♙e1, but is much more straightforward, because after 12...♖h5 13.♙h2, or 12...♗c7 13.♙e1 ♖bd7 14.♗d2, White maintains a stable edge – see 10...♖bd7 11.0-0 ♙e8 12.♙e1 b6 13.♙f4 ♗c7 14.♗d2). Now after 12...♖h5 (12...♙a7 does not deserve consideration, because after 13.♙f4 ♙ae7 14.♖d2!? White has an obvious advantage thanks to his permanent threat of ♖c4; after 13...♖h5 14.♙h2 ♙ae7?! 15.♖d2, or 15.♗d2, his position is again clearly better) White follows a standard scheme for similar positions: 13.♙g5!? ♙f6 14.♙e3

♗d7 15. ♖d2 ♗e5 16. ♕e2, with a stable edge and much the better prospects.

12. ♕c2

In the fight for an opening advantage, the move 12. ♕xc4!? also seems good. It is simpler and no worse than 12. ♕c2. Now the play becomes more or less forced. 12... ♗xe4 13. ♗xe4 ♖xe4 14. ♕g5↑

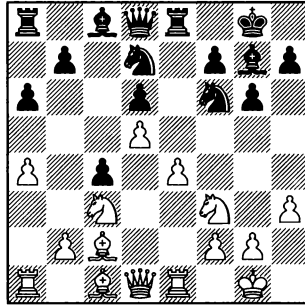


Black is faced with serious problems after 14... ♖f8 (14... ♖c7?! 15. ♕d3 ♖e8 16. ♖e1±) 15. ♖c2 ♖e8 16. ♖fe1 (16. ♖d2!?↑) 16... ♕f5 17. ♖d2 ♗d7 18. ♗d4± Sharavdorj – Pham, Manila 2001, or 14... ♕f6 15. ♖c2 ♖e8 16. ♕xf6 ♖xf6 17. ♖fe1 ♖f8 (17... ♖xe1+?! 18. ♖xe1 ♖d8 19. ♗g5 ♕f5 (19... ♗d7 20. ♗e4 ♗e5 21. ♖c3 ♕f5 22. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 23. ♖xe5± – Black is really suffering from the weakness of the dark squares in his camp) 20. ♖d2 ♗d7 21. g4 ♖c8 22. b3 ♕c2 23. ♗e6 ♖f6 24. ♗d4 ♗e5 25. g5 ♖d8 26. ♖xc2 ♖xg5+ 27. ♗f1±, or 20... h6?! 21. ♗e6 fxe6 22. dxe6 ♖e7 23. g4±) 18. ♖a3 ♗d7 19. ♖ae3±

12... ♗bd7 13. ♖e1

White is waiting to see what

plan his opponent is going to choose.



He has a stable edge in this position. Black has determined the position a bit too early (11...c4) and he has reduced his control over the key d4-square.

13... ♗c5

13... ♖b8 14. ♕f4 ♖c7 15. a5!? b5 16. axb6 ♖xb6 (16... ♗xb6?! 17. e5±) 17. ♖a2± Deviatkin – Rathnakaran, Mumbai 2011.

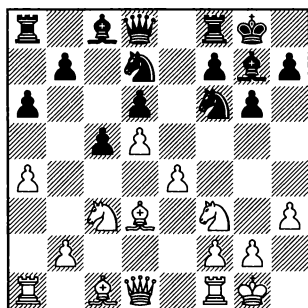
13... ♖c7 14. a5 (this is White's simplest way to fight for an opening advantage.) 14... b5 (14... ♖b8 15. ♕e3±) 15. axb6 ♗xb6 16. ♕e3± with a slight but stable positional edge.

14. ♕f4±

The game Khalifman – Tomczak, Germany 1990, continued: 14... ♗h5 (14... ♖b6 15. ♖b1↑) 15. ♕h2 ♖b6 (15... ♖c7?! 16. e5±; 15... ♖b8?! 16. e5±) 16. ♖b1 ♕d7 17. ♗d2 ♖c7 18. ♗xc4 ♗xe4 19. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 20. ♗xe4 ♖xc4 21. ♗xd6 ♖b4 22. ♖f3 ♖f8 23. b3±

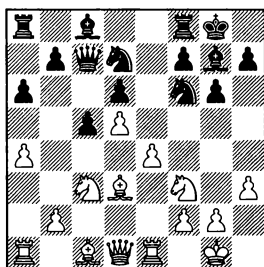
Chapter 8

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0–0 9.♘f3 a6 10.a4 ♘bd7 11.0–0



Now Black must choose between the following moves: **A) 11...♖e7**, **B) 11...b6**, **C) 11...♖b8**, **D) 11...♘h5** and **E) 11...♙e8**.

11...♖c7 12.♙e1



and here:

12...♙e8 13.♙f4 – see 11...♙e8
12.♙e1 ♖c7 13.♙f4;

The move 12...♖b8 does not seem very useful, because it is difficult for Black to advance with b7–b5 under favourable circumstances. 13.♙f4↑;

the prophylactic move 12...b6, after 13.♙f4 ♙e8, transposes to variation **E1**;

the seemingly active attempt 12...c4, following 13.♙f1 ♖b8 14. a5± (with the idea of ♙f4, ♘d2, or ♖a4) creates additional problems for Black with the protection of his c4-pawn;

White can answer 12...♘h5 with the blocking move 13.a5↑, after which Black is almost beyond salvation, for example after 13...♙e8 14.♙g5! (intending ♘d2 or ♖d2) 14...c4 15.♙e2!↑ and now 15...♙xc3? 16.bxc3 ♙xe4 fails to 17.♘d2 ♙e5 18.f4+–

A) 11...♖e7

We shall now analyse **A1) 12.♙f4** and **A2) 12.♙e1**.

A1) 12.♙f4

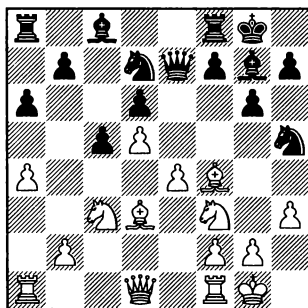
White can fight for the initiative with this move, but it gives Black more possibilities than

9. ♖f3 a6 10. a4 ♜bd7 11. 0-0

12. ♖e1. For example, here he is not obliged to play 12... ♖e8, which after 13. ♖e1 transposes to variation **E3**, but can instead reply

12... ♙h5,

reaching a familiar position (11... ♖e8 12. ♖e1 ♗e7 13. ♙f4 ♜h5), but without the inclusion of the moves ♖fe8 and ♖fe1.



13. ♙h2!?

White has fewer possibilities after the standard line 13. ♙g5 ♙f6!? 14. ♙e3 ♜e5 15. ♙e2 ♜xf3+ 16. ♙xf3 ♜g7. Black has good chances of equalizing here, since he can make use of the fact that he has not played ♖fe8. 17. a5 (after 17. ♗d2 Black can play 17... ♙d7 18. a5 ♙e5!?, planning ♖ae8 and f7-f5 with an approximately equal position) 17... ♙e5!? 18. ♗d2 f5 19. ♙g5 ♗f7 (19... ♗c7!? =) 20. ♜a4 (20. ♖fe1!?) 20... ♗xe4 21. ♙xe4 ♙f5 and Black's prospects are not at all worse, Blagojevic – Lejic, Tuzla 1991.

13... ♙h6

This is a fashionable move.

13... ♖e8 14. ♖e1 – see variation

E3.

It would not be logical for Black to opt for 13... ♜e5 14. ♙e2 ♜xf3+ 15. ♙xf3 ♜f6 (15... ♙e5?! 16. ♙xh5 ♙xh2+ 17. ♙xh2 ♗e5+ 18. f4 ♗xh5 19. ♗xh5 gxf4 20. a5±), owing to 16. e5!?, with a strong initiative for White. The game Va. Shishkin – I. Gorbunov, Odessa 2007, continued 16... dxe5 (16... ♜e8 17. e6!? ♙d4 18. ♖e1↑; 17... fxe6?! 18. dxe6 ♙xe6 19. ♖e1 ♖f5 20. ♙g4±) 17. d6 ♗e8 18. ♖e1 ♜d7 19. a5 (19. ♜d5!±) 19... ♗d8 20. ♗d2± and White had a colossal advantage in development and a strong initiative, at the cost of a single pawn.

It is no better for Black to play 13... ♖b8, because after 14. ♖e1 White's position is much better and he retains the initiative. 14... ♜e5 (14... ♖e8?! 15. g4 ♜hf6 16. e5±) 15. ♙e2 ♜f6 16. ♜d2 (16. ♜xe5!? dxe5 17. a5↑) 16... g5 17. ♙xe5!? dxe5?! (17... ♗xe5 18. ♜c4 ♗e7 19. e5 ♜e8 20. ♙g4↑; 19... dxe5 20. d6 ♗e6 21. ♙d3 e4 22. a5!±; 21... ♜d7 22. ♗c2± f5?! 23. ♜e3 ♗xd6 24. ♖ad1+–) 18. a5 ♜e8 19. ♜c4± f5? 20. d6 ♗f7 21. ♜b6 ♙e6 22. ♙h5+– Wells – O'Shaughnessy, Dublin 1993.

14. ♖e1

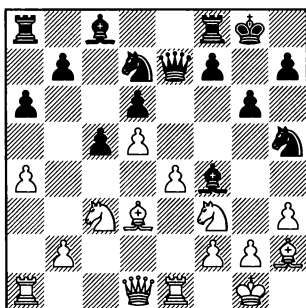
Here 14. ♜e2!? is worth considering, taking control of the f4-square and having a slight but stable positional edge owing to his extra space.

14... ♙f4

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14...♖f4 15.♙f1 ♘e5 16.a5!?
♙d7 17.♞a3±

After 14...f6 15.a5 ♘e5 16. ♖a4!?!↑, Black's position remains very passive. 16...♙f4 17.♘b6 ♞b8 18.♙f1 ♙d7 19.b4!? ♙b5 20.♙xf4!? ♘xf4 21.bxc5 dxc5 22.g3 ♙xf1 23. gxf4 ♘xf3+ 24.♞xf3 ♙b5 25.♞ad1 ♞bd8 26.♞g3± Piket – Romanishin, Manila 1992.



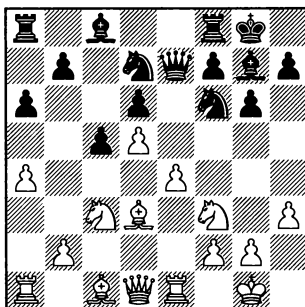
15.g3!? ♙h6 16.♙f1

White's prospects in this complicated and non-standard position are clearly better. He is threatening the manoeuvre ♘d2 and f4, followed by ♘d2-f3, putting Black's minor pieces, the knight on h5 and the bishop on h6, out of play.

16.♘d2?! ♘e5 17.♙e2 (17.♙f1? ♙xd2–+) 17...♞g5±

16...♞e8 17.♘d2!? ♞b8 18. f4 ♞f6 19.♘f3± with a great positional advantage for White, in view of the permanent threat of the pawn break e4-e5, Rogozenko – Carmacin, Eforie Nord 2009. After 19...♘g7 or 19...♞e7, it is very good for White to play 20.e5.

A2) 12.♞e1



This waiting move, which delays determining the position of White's dark-squared bishop, considerably reduces Black's options regarding his further plan of action.

12...♘e5!?

This is clearly Black's best move.

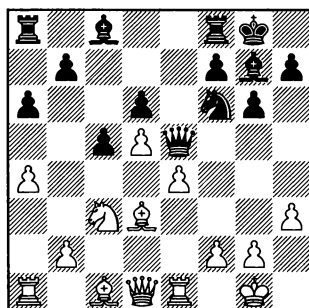
For 12...♞e8 13.♙f4 – see variation E3.

After 12...♘h5 White's best response is to follow the standard plan for this type of position: 13.♙g5!? ♙f6 14.♙e3 ♘e5 15.♙e2 ♘xf3+ 16.♙xf3, with a stable positional advantage. The game Potkin – Zhou Jiachao, Ningbo 2010, continued 16...♘g7 17.♞d2 (17. a5!?) 17...♙d7 18.a5!? ♞ab8 19. ♖a4!? ♙xa4 20.♞xa4↑ b5?! 21. axb6 ♞xb6 22.b4! ♞xb4 23.♞xb4 cxb4 24.♞xb4 ♞a8 25.♞a5 ♙e5 26.♞c1 ♞d8 27.♞xd8+ ♞xd8 28. ♙e2 (28.g4!?± a5 29.♙d1 ♞a8 30.♙a4±; 28...f5 29.exf5 gxf5 30. ♙d1±) 28...a5 29.f4 ♙f6 30.♞c6 ♘e8 31.♙b5±

9. ♖f3 a6 10. a4 ♜bd7 11. 0-0

12... ♜e8 13. a5 (another interesting try here is 13. ♜b1!?, with the idea of transferring the knight to the strategically important c4-square with ♜b1-d2 or ♜b1-a3) 13... ♜e5 (13... f6?! 14. ♜a4 ♜e5 15. ♜b6±; 15. ♜xe5!? fxe5 16. ♜b6 ♜b8 17. ♙e3± planning b2-b4) 14. ♜a4!? ♜xd3 (14... ♜xf3+ 15. ♜xf3 ♙d7 16. ♜b6 ♜d8 17. ♜b1 ♜c7 18. b4 cxb4 19. ♙d2±) 15. ♜xd3 ♙d7 16. ♜b6 ♙b5 (after 16... ♜d8?! 17. ♙g5!? f6 18. ♙f4 ♙b5 19. ♜d2, in view of the threat of b2-b4, Black's position becomes very difficult; if 17... ♙f6 18. ♙xf6, White gains the advantage after both 18... ♜xf6 19. e5± and 18... ♜xf6 19. e5±) 17. ♜a3!? ♜d8 18. ♙e3± with ideas of e5!? and ♜ac1 followed by b2-b4.

13. ♜xe5 ♜xe5



14. a5!?

This manoeuvre blocks Black's queenside and retains a slight but stable positional edge. White will be constantly threatening to play ♜a3-b3 and ♜a4-b6, with a clearly better position.

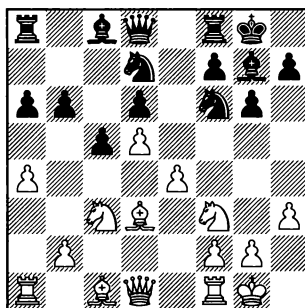
Here 14. f4 is risky and after 14... ♜d4+ 15. ♙e3 ♜b4∞ it leads to a complicated and rather unclear position.

14... ♙d7

14... ♜e8 15. ♜a3!?±

15. ♜a3!? ♜ac8 16. ♙c4 ♜fe8 17. ♜b3± White maintains a slight but stable positional edge.

B) 11...b6



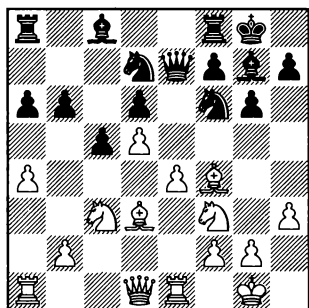
The idea of this move is to prevent a4-a5, but it has certain drawbacks. It is too slow and passive for Black to play like this, since he falls considerably behind in the development of his queen-side minor pieces.

12. ♜e1 ♜e7

12... ♜e8 13. ♙f4 – see variation E1.

13. ♙f4

White has a stable positional edge, since the position of the black queen on the same file as a white rook is definitely not in Black's favour, owing to the permanent threat of the e4-e5 break.



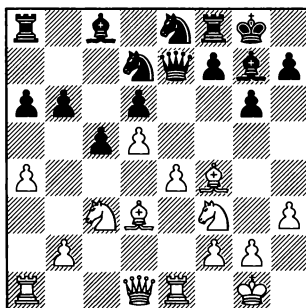
13...dxe8

It would be too passive for Black to play 13...b7, because his light-squared bishop has no prospects on this square. Its possible activity is severely restricted by White's pawn wedge on d5 and e4. The game Morozevich – Ju. Polgar, Mainz 2008, continued 14. b3 (14. d2±; it might be interesting for White to try the prophylactic move 14. h2!?, with the idea of answering 14...h5 with 15. c4 ffe8 16. b3 de5 17. e2!?) 14...h5 15. h2 h6 16. aad1 (16. e5!?) 16...f4 17. xf4 xf4 18. f1± with a slight but stable positional advantage for White, thanks to his better piece coordination and the passive position of Black's light-squared bishop on the b7-square.

After 13...h5 14. h2!? de5 15. e2, Black's position is clearly inferior and in order to avoid the worst he is almost forced to continue with 15...f6 (15...xf3+ 16. xf3 f6 17. e5±; 16...e5 17. xh5 xh2+ 18. xh2 we5+ 19. g3

xh5 20. xh5 gxh5 21. e5±), but after 16. d2, or 16. de5 dxe5 17. c2 (planning the manoeuvre b1-d2(a3)-c4), his position is prospectless.

After 13...de5 14. de5 dxe5 15. g5!? White's initiative is very strong. The game Doe Tling – Huschenbeth, Werder Bremen 2007, continued: 15...d6 (15...h6 16. e3 de8 17. d2 h7 18. a5 b5 19. b3 b7 20. de2± c8 21. ac1 f5?! 22. exf5 gxf5 23. dg3± e4 24. xc5 xc5 25. xf5!+-) 16. b1 de8 17. a3 h6 18. e3± f5?! 19. f3 (19. exf5!? gxf5 20. dc4 d8 21. a5 b5 22. db6 b8 23. xc5+-) 19...f4 20. f2 c7 21. b4 cxb4 22. b3 f6 23. xxb4+- with a strategically winning position for White.



14. d2!?

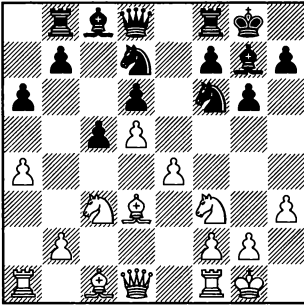
After 14. d2 de5!? 15. de5 dxe5!? 16. e3 f5 the position is much more complicated and unstable and Black has many more possibilities to organize counterplay, since his knight on e8 will soon occupy the good blocking square on d6.

9. ♖f3 a6 10. a4 ♜bd7 11. 0-0

14... ♜e5 15. ♙f1 ♜c7 16. ♙g3± White maintains a slight but stable positional edge.

b4!+–) 13. ♙g5!? ♙f6 14. ♙e3 ♜e5 15. ♙e2 ♜xf3+ 16. ♙xf3 ♜g7± and White still has a slight but stable edge, since Black's knight on g7 is very passive, Xu Jun – Martinez, Calvia 2004.

C) 11... ♙b8



This move is too slow and White's simplest response is the standard

12. ♙f4!?,

maintaining his positional pressure.

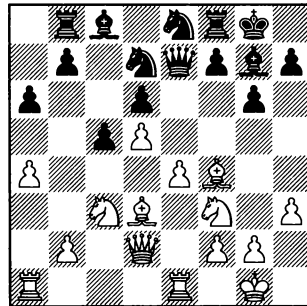
Another good continuation is 12. ♙e1, not yet determining the position of the dark-squared bishop and intending to answer 12... ♙e8, 12... ♙c7 or 12... ♙e7 with 13. ♙f4!?↑. In such positions the move ♙b8 does not seem particularly useful, since it is almost impossible for Black to arrange the b7-b5 advance under favourable circumstances. After 12... ♜h5 (12... ♜e8 is too passive, because with 13. ♙g5!?. White maintains a stable initiative after 13... ♙f6 14. ♙h6↑, or 13... f6 14. ♙e3 ♜e5 15. ♜xe5 fxe5 16. a5!? b5 17. axb6 ♙xb6 18. ♙d2 ♙d7 19. ♙eb1↑ planning ♜a2 and b4; 17... ♙xb6? 18.

12... ♙e7

In practice Black has played the passive move 12... ♜e8?! more often, after which White has the pleasant choice between blockading Black's queenside with 13. a5↑ Bocharov – Rathnakaran, Delhi 2010 or the move 13. ♙d2↑ with ideas of e4-e5 or ♙b1 and b2-b4, Epishin – Pesorda, Graz 1997.

After 12... ♙c7 (with the idea of c4 and b5) 13. ♜d2!? ♜e5 14. ♙xe5 dxe5 15. a5 ♙d7 16. ♜c4 ♙b5 17. ♜b6, Black's problems are just beginning.

13. ♙e1 ♜e8 14. ♙d2±

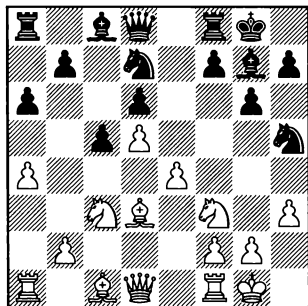


White maintains a stable positional advantage, based on his extra space and better piece coordination. 14... f6 15. a5!? b5 16. axb6 ♙xb6 17. ♙c2 ♜e5 18.

♖xe5 fxe5 19.♙e3 ♜f7 20.♜b1
♜f6 21.♜d2 ♜h5 22.♜c4 ♜b8
23.♙f1± Zhao Zong Yuan – Rath-
uakaran, Sydney 2009.

After 13...b6 14.♙e2!? (again
planning ♜d2) 14...♞e8 15.♜d2
♜g7 16.♙f4 ♜e5 17.♞c2 ♞c7 18.
♞ab1↑ White maintains an endur-
ing initiative.

D) 11...♜h5



12.♙g5!?

White replies in a standard
way.

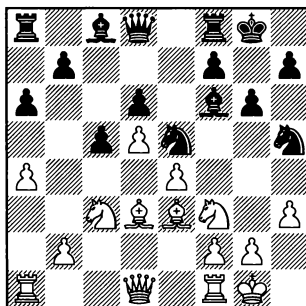
12...♙f6

After 12...♞c7 13.a5!?, it is
hard for Black to find a construc-
tive plan, since the attractive-
looking line 13...b5 (if 13...♞b8
14.♙e2± planning ♜d2; or 13...
♜e5 14.♙e2 ♜xf3+ 15.♙xf3 ♜f6
16.e5!? dxe5?! 17.d6 ♞d8 18.
♜a4±; or 16...♜e8 17.exd6 ♜xd6
18.♞e1±) can be met with 14.axb6
♞xb6 15.♜a4 ♞c7 16.♙e2 and
White has a stable edge, for exam-
ple: 16...♞e8 17.♜d2 ♜hf6 18.
♜c3±, or 16...♞b8 17.♞a2!±

13.♙e3!? ♜e5

13...♞e8 14.♞e1 – see variation
E2.

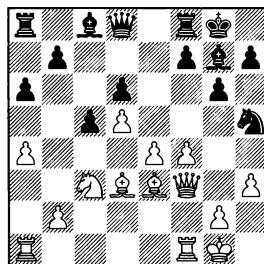
It is too passive for Black to
play 13...♙g7, because of 14.
♙e2!± (planning ♜d2).



14.♙e2

This is the simplest.

It is also possible for White to
try the sharp line: 14.♜xe5 ♙xe5
15.f4 ♙g7 16.♞f3



His chances are better in this
position, but the play is forcing
and White must play very accu-
rately. Here are a few examples
which deserve attention:

16...♞c7 17.♞ae1 (17.♞ac1!?
♙d7 18.b4 c4 19.♙b1 b5 20.a5
♞ae8 21.♙b6 ♞c8 22.g4 ♜f6 23.f5±
Arun Parasad – Praveen Kumar,
Panaji 2012) 17...♙d7 18.g4 ♜f6

9.♟f3 a6 10.a4 ♘bd7 11.0-0 ♜e8 12.♞e1

19.e5!? ♘e8 20.♘e4± f5 21.exf6!? ♘xf6, Borovikov – Lindermann, Hastings 2003, 22.♘g5±;

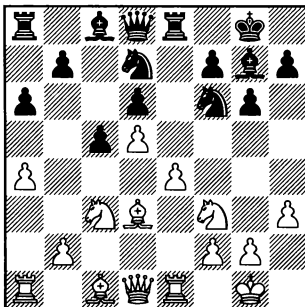
16...♞e8 17.e5!? dxe5 18.fxe5 ♞xe5 19.♞xf7+ ♔h8 20.♙xc5 (20.♞ae1!?± ♞xe3?! 21.♞xe3 ♙d4 22.♞ff3 ♞g8 23.♞xg8+ ♔xg8 24.♔h2 ♙xe3 25.♞xe3±; 20...♙xh3 21.♙h6 ♞xe1 22.♞xg7+ ♘g7 23.♞xe1 ♞h4 24.♞e4 ♞g3 25.♙f1 ♙f5 26.♞e7 ♞g8 27.♞f6±) 20...♙xh3 (20...♙e6!?∞) 21.♞f2 (21.♙d4!?±) 21...♞h4= 22.gxh3?! (22.♞af1=) 22...♞g3+ 23.♞g2 ♞xd3≠ 24.♞xb7? ♞ae8—+ Csizsar – Vaulin, Zalakaros 1992.

14...♘xf3+ 15.♙xf3 ♘g7 16.♙f4±. White maintains a small but stable positional advantage. **16...♞e7 17.a5!? ♙e5 18.♙xe5 ♞xe5 19.♞e1 ♘e8?! (19...♙d7 20.♞a3 ♘e8 21.♞b3±) 20.♘a4 ♙d7 21.♘b6±** Savchenko – Velasco, Palma 2009.

E) 11...♞e8

This is Black's main and most popular move in this position.

12.♞e1



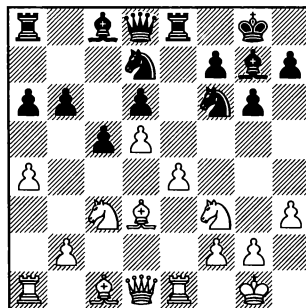
This move delays committing White's dark-squared bishop and is his most serious weapon in his fight for an opening advantage. It has been the choice of some very famous players, such as Karjakin, Radjabov and Jakovenko.

Here We shall analyse in detail: **E1) 12...b6**, **E2) 12...♘h5**, **E3) 12...♞e7** and **E4) 12...♞c7**.

12...♞b8 13.♙f4 ♞c7 (13...♘e5?! 14.♘xe5 dxe5 15.♙e3±) 14.♙c4± – see variation **E4c**.

12...♘e5 13.♘xe5 ♞xe5 14.♙f4 (Black's rook on e5 is misplaced and insecure, so it would be interesting for White to try 14.a5N here, with a slight edge) 14...♞e8 15.♞d2± White's prospects are better, thanks to his more actively placed pieces and his extra space. Black is limited to passive defence.

E1) 12...b6



This move prevents White's blockading pawn advance a4-a5, but it seems a bit passive, since it

Chapter 8

does nothing to impede White's basic plan of ♔f4 and ♖d2.

13.♔f4 ♜c7

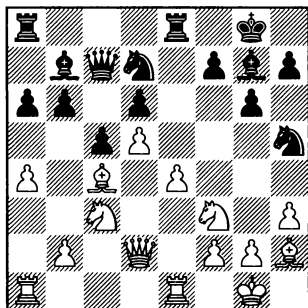
After 13...♗e5 14.♗xe5 dxe5 15.♔e3↑, Black's position is clearly inferior, owing to White's permanent threat of a4-a5 and the possible transfer of his knight from c3 to c4 (after ♜c2) via ♗b1-a3(d2).

13...♜e7 14.♔h2!? This is a useful prophylactic move, retaining a slight but stable positional advantage. Black has problems finding a plan for active counterplay, because his queen is not well placed on e7. 14...♔b7 (after 14...♗h5 it is possible for White to play 15.♖d2, with the idea of answering 15...♗e5 with the standard move 16.♔e2, retaining a considerably better position) 15.♔f1 (15.♖b3!?, 15.♖d2!?) 15...♞ad8?! (15...♗h5 16.♗d2↑) 16.♗d2± Du-mitrache – Sernadje, Metz 1991.

14.♖d2 ♔b7 15.♔c4!?

White prevents c5-c4 and prepares e4-e5.

15...♗h5 16.♔h2



16...h6

16...♞e7 17.♞e2 ♞ae8 18.♞ae1 h6, De Laat – Pillhock, corr. 1992 (18...♗e5 19.♗xe5 ♔xe5 20.♔xe5 ♞xe5 21.f4+–) 19.g4 ♗hf6 20.♖d3!± and Black has no good defence against the threats of e4-e5 and ♔xa6.

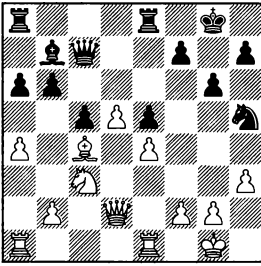
After the tricky move 16...♞ad8, White should avoid the attractive-looking reply 17.♖d3?!, which runs into 17...♗e5! (17...♞a8?! 18.♖c2! ♗e5 19.♔e2 ♗xf3 20.♔xf3 ♗f6 21.e5↑) 18.♗xe5 ♔xe5 19.♔xa6 (it is even worse for White to play 19.♔xe5 ♞xe5 20.♔xa6, since after 20...♗f4 21.♖f1 ♔xa6 22.♖xa6 ♞g5± his king turns out to be in serious danger) 19...♔xh2+ 20.♔xh2 ♗f4 21.♖c4 ♔xa6 22.♖xa6 c4!± and White's queen is misplaced. Instead, he should play simply 17.♞ad1!, emphasizing the senselessness of the move 16...♞d8, since now 17...♗e5 leads to a very difficult position after 18.♗xe5 ♔xe5 19.♔xe5 dxe5 (19...♞xe5?! 20.f4 ♞ee7 21.e5±) 20.d6.

After 16...♗e5 17.♔xe5 ♔xe5 18.♗xe5 dxe5 Black's knight is out of play on h5 and White retains a space advantage, enabling him to organize an attack on the queenside, as demonstrated in the game Kazhgaleyev – Glicenstein, Issy les Moulineaux 2004:

(diagram)

19.♞ac1 (it is also possible to play 19.d6 ♖d7 20.♞ad1 ♗f4

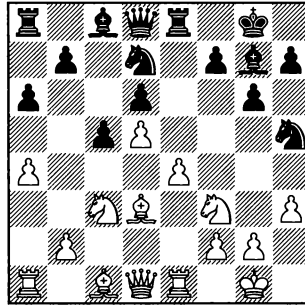
9. ♖f3 a6 10. a4 ♜bd7 11. 0-0 ♜e8 12. ♜e1



24. ♜xe1 gxf5 25. ♜f5+-) 20... ♜hf6 21. ♜c4 White too over the initiative completely in the game Jakovenko – Gashimov, Sochi 2008.

E2) 12... ♜h5

21. ♜c2! with ideas of ♜b3, ♜d2 and ♜ed1, giving him an enduring initiative) 19... ♜d6 20. ♜f1 ♜c8 21. ♜b1 ♜d7 22. b3 b5 23. ♜e3 ♜ec8 24. axb5 (or 24. ♜d2!?± with the idea of deploying the rooks on a1 and c1, and if 24... bxa4 25. bxa4 ♜xa4 26. ♜c4 ♜f6 27. ♜c3 ♜e8 28. g3±, or 28. ♜e3± when White's compensation for the pawn is more than sufficient) 24... axb5. Here, instead of 25. ♜c2, as played in the game, it was much stronger to continue with 25. ♜d2±, with the plan of doubling the rooks on the c-file, or playing ♜e1.

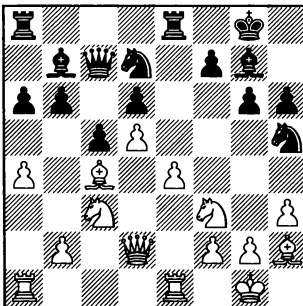


This is a relatively fashionable move, but it does not solve Black's problems.

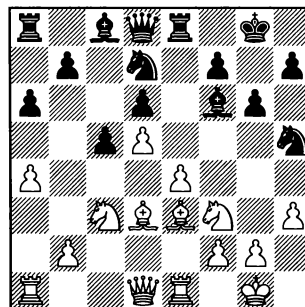
13. ♜g5 ♜f6

13... ♜c7 14. ♜f1!? ♜e5 15. ♜d2 h6 16. ♜e3 ♜e7 17. f4 ♜d7 18. ♜f3± ♜h4?! 19. ♜c4 ♜f8 20. g4± Avrukh – R.Hansen, Copenhagen 2009.

14. ♜e3!?



17. ♜ad1 ♜h7 18. ♜c2± ♜e7?! 19. ♜e2 ♜g8?! 20. ♜d2 (20. e5! ♜xe5 21. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 22. ♜xh5 gxf5 23. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 24. ♜xe5 dxe5 25. ♜f5+-; 22... ♜xh2+ 23. ♜xh2 ♜xe1



This is a very fashionable tabia

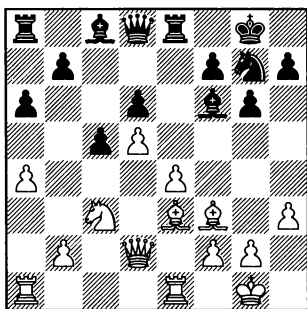
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in the contemporary theory of this line of the Modern Benoni.

14...♟e5

Black sometimes plays 14... ♟b8, to which White's simplest response is 15. ♟d2, with the idea of 15... ♟e5 16. ♟e2 ♟xf3+ 17. ♟xf3 ♟g7 18. ♟ab1±, keeping a slight but stable positional edge.

15. ♟e2 ♟xf3+ 16. ♟xf3 ♟g7 17. ♟d2±



Black's knight on g7 is very passive and White's prospects are better. He plans to develop an initiative on the queenside with ♟ab1 and b2-b4.

17...b6

17... ♟e5 18. a5 b5 19. axb6 ♟xb6 (19... ♟b8 20. ♟a4± f5?! 21. ♟g5 ♟f6 22. ♟xf6 ♟xf6 23. ♟c3±) 20. ♟eb1± ♟b4 21. ♟a4 ♟b3 22. ♟d1 ♟xc3?! 23. ♟c1 ♟b5 24. bxc3± Potkin – Garakov, Novokuznetsk 2008.

After 17... ♟d7 White's simplest response is 18. a5!?, for example: 18... ♟e5 (18... b5 19. axb6 ♟xb6 20. ♟a2±) 19. ♟a4 ♟xa4 20. ♟xa4±

b5 21. axb6 ♟xb6 22. b4 (after 22. ♟b1± White has a stable advantage, because his opponent's knight on g7 is out of play) 22... ♟b5! 23. ♟d1 c4 24. ♟c2 f5 25. ♟e2± Potkin – Chirila, Budva 2009, planning 25... ♟ac8 26. ♟a2 fxe4 27. g4±, or 25... ♟ec8 26. f4 ♟f6 27. e5 dxe5 28. ♟c5±

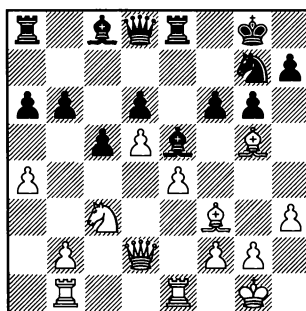
18. ♟ab1 ♟e5 19. ♟g5

The immediate 19. b4!? is interesting and after 19... ♟xh3 20. ♟e2 (20. a5!?) 20... ♟d7 21. a5, his attack against Black's queenside is quite sufficient to compensate for the sacrificed pawn.

19...f6

19... ♟c7 20. ♟f4±

After 19... ♟f6 it is worth considering 20. ♟xf6!? (20. ♟f4±) 20... ♟f6 21. b4↑ and here Black cannot capture the pawn with 21... ♟xh3 because after 22. e5! he loses a piece: 22... ♟xe5 23. ♟xe5 dxe5 24. ♟e4 ♟f5 25. bxc5 bxc5 26. ♟e3+–

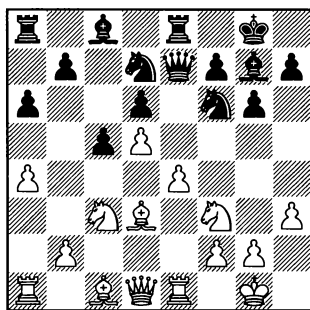


20. ♟f4± and in view of the threat of b2-b4 and the passive position of Black's knight on g7, White maintains a slight but sta-

9. ♖f3 a6 10. a4 ♜bd7 11. 0-0 ♝e8 12. ♝e1

ble positional advantage. 20... ♝a7 21. b4 ♝f7 22. ♙d1 (22. ♙xe5!? fxe5 23. bxc5 bxc5 24. ♝b8±; 22... ♝xe5 23. bxc5 bxc5 24. ♙e2!?±) 22... ♝c7 23. bxc5 bxc5 24. ♙xe5 fxe5± Karjakin – Gashimov, Sochi 2008.

E3) 12... ♝e7



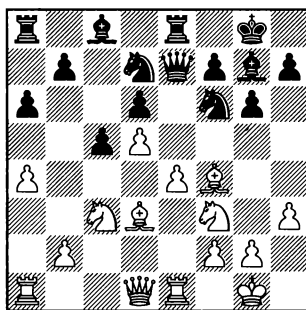
The vis-à-vis of Black's queen and White's rook on the e-file cannot be good for Black from the positional point of view.

White has much better prospects in this set-up and his simplest response is the standard move

13. ♙f4

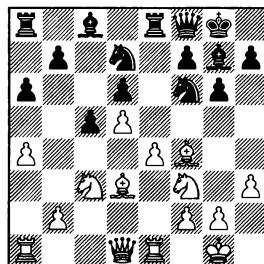
However, it is also worth considering a move which blockades his opponent's queenside – 13. a5 – after which Black has a few problems: 13... ♝b8 (after 13... ♙e5 14. ♙xe5 ♝xe5 15. ♝a3±, with the idea of ♝b3, White has a stable edge; if 13... ♙h5 14. ♙g5 ♙f6 15. ♙e3 ♙e5 16. ♙e2 ♙xf3+ 17. ♙xf3 ♙g7 18. ♙a4±, Black is in a posi-

tional bind and this line emphasizes to a certain degree the drawback of the plan with 12... ♝e7 as not really being in the spirit of the position) 14. ♝a3!? (with the idea of ♝b3) 14... b5 (after 14... ♝f8?!, Black was completely outplayed positionally: 15. ♙a4 ♙h5 16. ♝b3 ♙h6 17. ♙b6 ♙f4 18. ♙c4 ♝g7 19. ♙xd7 ♙xd7 20. ♝b6+- Neverov – Pantsulaia, Abu Dhabi 2007) 15. axb6 ♝xb6 16. ♝e2±



13... ♙h5

In practice the move 13... ♝f8 has been tried a few times, with the idea of removing his queen from the e-file and evading the "X-ray" of the enemy rook on e1. However, this move seems rather awkward and unnatural and cannot really be good for Black.



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Here are a few examples which confirm the drawbacks of the move ♖f8:

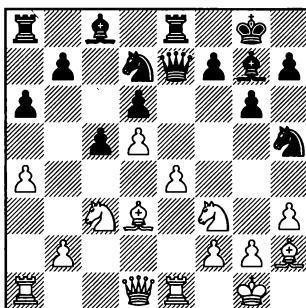
14.♔h2 ♘h5 15.a5!? (15.♔f1 b6 16.♖c2 h6 17.♙e2 ♜b8 18.♘d2 ♘hf6 19.♙ad1 ♙d8 20.♘c4 ♘e8 21.f4± b5?! 22.axb5 axb5 23.♘a5 b4 24.♘b5 b3 25.♙d2 ♙b7 26.♘c6 ♙xc6 27.dxc6 ♘b6 28.c7+– Fressinet – Zhang Pengxiang, Paris 2006) 15...♜b8 (15...♙h6?! 16.♔f1±) 16.♘a4 ♘e5 (16...b5?! 17.axb6 ♘xb6? 18.♘xc5+–) 17.♙e2± Kaidanov – D.Gurevich, San Diego 2004;

14.a5!? ♜b8 15.♔h2 ♘h5 16.♘a4 ♘e5 17.g4!? ♘xg4 (17...♘xf3+ 18.♙xf3 ♘f6 19.e5±; 17...♘f6 18.♘xe5 dxe5 19.♘b6±) 18.hxg4 ♙xg4 19.♔f1 f5 20.e5! dxe5 (20...♙xe5 21.♙xe5 dxe5 22.♙b3 ♙xf3 23.♙xf3 ♙bd8 24.♙ad1±; 21...♙xe5 22.♙xe5 dxe5 23.♙b3 ♙xf3 24.♙xf3 ♙d6 25.♙c1 ♙c8 26.♘b6 ♙c7 27.♘c4 ♙f6 28.d6 ♙d7 29.♙e3+–) 21.d6!? (21.♙b3!?+–) 21...♙h8?! (21...♙xf3 22.♙xf3 ♙xd6 23.♙ac1±) 22.d7 ♙e7 23.♘xc5+– Gupta – Pantsulaia, Dubai 2008.

14.♔h2

In this position White exerts positional pressure and has the initiative.

14.♔g5 ♙f6 15.♙e3 ♘e5 16.♙e2 ♘xf3+ (16...♘g7 17.♘d2±) 17.♙xf3 ♘g7 18.a5!?± – White has a stable advantage thanks to his extra space and the misplacement of Black's knight on g7.



14...♙e5

This is the main reply in this position.

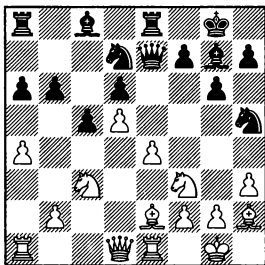
14...♙f8 15.a5 – see 13...♙f8 14.♔h2 ♘h5 15.a5.

It cannot be good for Black to play 14...♜b8?! and in the game Radjabov – Ivanchuk, Odessa 2007, after 15.g4! ♘hf6 16.e5! dxe5 17.♘xe5 ♘xe5 18.♙xe5± Black felt compelled to give up his queen for a rook and a bishop with 18...♙xe5 19.♙xe5 ♙xe5 but he did not gain enough compensation.

After 14...b6, preventing the blockading manoeuvre a4-a5, the most energetic response for White is 15.♙e2 (he is also clearly better after 15.♙d2 ♙b7 16.♙ab1± and in this position Black has great problems finding a good plan, for example if 16...♘e5 17.♙e2± and he is reduced to a waiting strategy) (diagram)

Once again, in view of White's threat of ♘d2-c4, Black has difficulty in finding an effective plan for counterplay, for example:

9. ♖f3 a6 10. a4 ♜bd7 11. 0-0 ♜e8 12. ♜e1



15... ♙b7?! 16. ♜d2±;

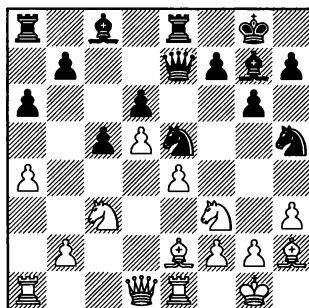
15... ♜e5 16. ♜d2±;

15... ♙h6 16. ♜d2 ♜f4 17. ♜c4 ♙g5 18. ♙g3 ♙f6 19. ♙f1↑ and White has the initiative and a clearly better position;

15... ♜b8 16. ♜d2 ♜hf6 17. ♜c4 ♜e5 18. ♜xe5 dxe5 19. ♙c2± with the plan of ♜d1-e3-c4, or ♜b1-a3-c4.

15. ♙e2!

After this, Black has great problems and his position is clearly worse.



15... ♙d7

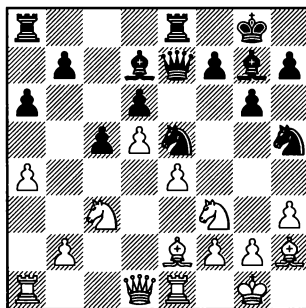
The alternatives are no better:

15... ♜f6 16. ♜xe5 dxe5 17. a5 ♙d7 18. ♜a3±;

15... ♜b8 16. ♙d2!?!± with the

idea of 16... ♜xf3+ 17. ♙xf3 b5 18. axb5 axb5 19. e5! dxe5 20. d6 ♙d8 (20... ♙e6 21. ♜a7+-) 21. ♜a7+-;

15... ♜xf3+ 16. ♙xf3 ♙e5 (16... ♜f6?! 17. e5 dxe5 18. ♙xe5±; 18. d6 ♙d8 19. ♙xe5 ♜e6 20. a5 ♜e8 21. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 22. ♙xe6 ♙xe6 23. ♜e4 ♜c8 24. ♜xc5 ♙xd6 25. b4+- Golod – Hedman, Helsingor 2008) 17. ♙xh5 ♙xh2+ 18. ♜xh2 ♙e5+ 19. ♜g1 ♙xh5 (19... gxf5 20. ♙b3!? ♜h8 21. ♜e3 ♙g8 22. ♜h1 h4 23. a5±) 20. ♙xh5 gxf5 21. f4 (21. a5!?!±) 21... f6 22. e5!?! (22. a5 ♜g7?! 23. ♜a3 ♜e7 24. ♜b3± with a clearly better endgame for White, Raceanu – Ducsoara, Bucharest 2002) 22... fxe5 23. fxe5 ♙xe5 (23... dxe5?! 24. ♜e4 ♜g7 25. ♜d6 ♜d8 26. ♜c4 ♙f5 27. ♜b6 ♜ab8 28. ♙xe5±) 24. ♙xe5 dxe5 25. ♜e1 ♙d7 26. ♙xe5±



16. a5!?

This useful move blockades Black's queenside and I believe it deserves great attention. It enables White to fight for a considerable opening advantage, since he can now choose between various

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different plans, based on dxe5 , d2 , or g2-g4 .

Some of these plans can be tried immediately:

16. dxe5 exe5 17. exh5 exh2+ 18. exh2 we5+ 19. g3 wxh5 (19... gxh5 20. f4 wd4 21. wf3 f5 22. Ead1 fxe4 23. $\text{Exe4}\pm$) 20. wxh5 gxh5 21. $\text{f4}\pm$ with a slightly better endgame for White.

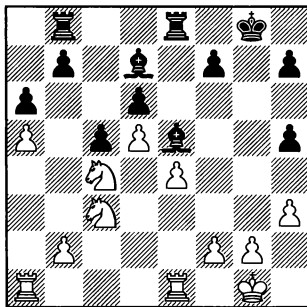
16. d2 wg5 (16... wf6 17. $\text{exe5!?$ Exe5 18. $\text{dc4}\pm$) 17. exh5 wxh5 18. wxh5 gxh5 19. $\text{exe5!?$ exe5 20. $\text{dc4}\pm$, again with a slightly better endgame for White, Juan Carlos Gonzalez – Sariego, Holguin 1991.

After 16.g4, in tournament practice the only move tried so far is 16... df6 (instead there is an interesting possibility of sacrificing a piece for two pawns with 16... $\text{exg4!?$ 17. hxg4 dxc4 , reaching a very complicated position which needs thorough analysis; its correct evaluation will be crucial in determining whether White can fight successfully for an opening advantage with the move 16.g4) 17. d2! $\text{g5!?$ 18. dc4 h5 (18... dxc4 19. exc4 wd8 20. wd3 exc8 21. e5 dxe5 22. Exe5 d7 23. Exe8+ wxex8 24. $\text{d6}\pm$) 19. exe5 dxe5 20. a5! Ead8 21. db6 hxg4 22. exg4 exg4 23. hxg4 d7 24. dxd7 wx7d7 25. wf3 wb8 26. da4 xf8 27. g2+- Bacrot – Galeo, Escaldes 1998.

16... Eab8 17. $\text{d2!?$

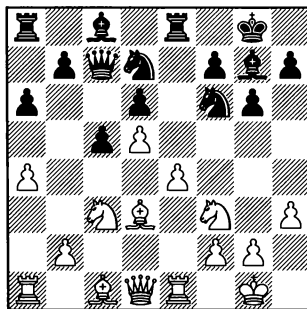
17.g4 $\text{exg4!?$ 18. hxg4 $\text{dxc4}\infty$

17... wg5 18. exh5 wxh5 19. wxh5 gxh5 20. $\text{exe5!?$ exe5 21. $\text{dc4}\pm$ with clearly the better prospects for White in this endgame.



His knights are stronger than Black's bishops in such positions and White's pawn structure is definitely better.

E4) 12... wc7



This move does not solve Black's problems either.

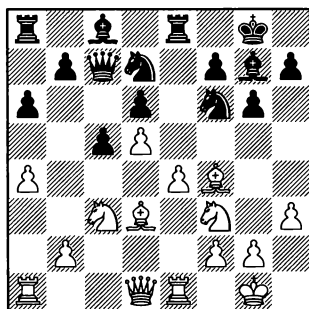
13. xf4

This standard and very good

9.♟f3 a6 10.a4 ♖bd7 11.0-0 ♜e8 12.♞e1 ♝c7 13.♟f4

move provides White with a slight but stable positional edge.

The move 13.a5, blocking his opponent's queenside, also deserves consideration. The game Bacrot – Schader, Yerevan 1996, continued 13...♙e5 (13...b5 14.axb6 ♜xb6 15.♞a3!± ♜b8?! 16.♟c4↑) 14.♟xe5 dxe5?! (14...♞xe5 is an improvement but after 15.♟f4 ♜e8 16.♟a4± White maintains a stable positional advantage) 15.♟e3 ♟f8 16.♟a4 ♜xa5 17.b4 ♜d8 18.bxc5+–



We shall now analyse the following possibilities for Black: **E4a) 13...c4?!**, **E4b) 13...♟h5** and **E4c) 13...♞b8**.

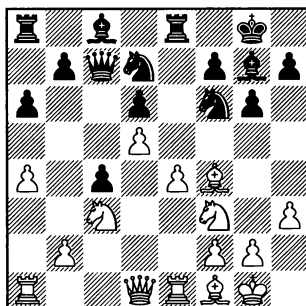
13...b6 14.♜d2 – see variation **E1**.

After 13...♟e5?! 14.♟xe5 dxe5 15.♟e3 b6 16.♞c1± Black has serious problems on the queenside.

E4a) 13...c4?!

This move does not promise anything good for Black.

14.♟f1



White is clearly better, since Black does not have any good plan of action. He has lost control over the d4-square and now White need not fear Black's plan of b7-b5 which, with a black pawn on c5 rather than c4, is usually quite promising for him.

14...♞b8

14...♟h5 15.♟h2 ♟e5 (15...♟c5?! 16.g4 ♟f6 17.e5 dxe5 18.♟xe5+–; 15...♞b8 16.a5!? b5 17.axb6 ♞xb6 18.g4!? ♞xb2 19.♟a4 ♞b4 20.e5!? ♟xe5 21.♟xe5 ♟xe5 22.gxh5±; 18...♟hf6 19.♟d2± Burmakin – I.Malakhov, St Petersburg 2008) 16.♟xe5 dxe5 (16...♟xe5 17.♟xe5 dxe5 18.♞e2±; 17...♞xe5 18.♜d4 ♟f4 19.♞e3 ♟d7 20.♟xc4 ♞g5 21.♞g3±) 17.d6 (White can content himself with winning a pawn by 17.♟d2 ♟d7 18.♟xc4 b5 19.d6 ♜c5 20.♟e3 b4 21.♟cd5 ♜d6 22.♟c4± with the nasty threats of ♟db6 and ♟xb4, which are impossible to parry.) 17...♜c6 18.♜d5 ♟e6 19.♜xc6

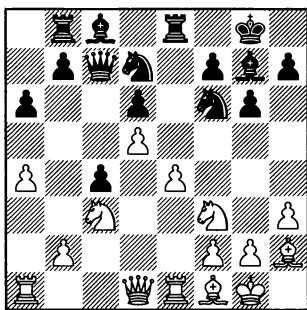
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bxc6 20.a5!± planning 20...♞ab8
21.♜a4±, or 20...♞ad8 21.♞ed1
♜f4 22.♜a4±

15.♙h2±

This is a prophylactic waiting move (defending against ♜h5), which creates very serious problems for Black. Not only is he stuck for an appropriate plan of action, he even has difficulty in finding a good move.

It is also reasonable for White to continue in the standard manner with 15.a5 b5 (15...♜h5 16.♙h2 – see 15.♙h2) 16.axb6 ♞xb6 17.♞a4!?±, or 17.♞c2±



15...♜h5

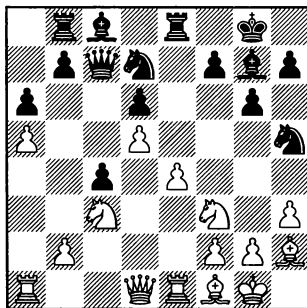
After the natural move 15...b5?! the game Serrano Salvador – Fernandez, Mystoles 2008, continued 16.axb5 axb5 17.♜d4± and Black ended up in a very difficult position; now if 17...♜e5, White has the strong continuation 18.♜dxb5!? ♞c5 19.b4!? cxb3 (19...♞xb4?! 20.♞b1 ♞c5 21.

♜a4+–; 19...♞b6 20.♙f4+–) 20.♞xb3+–

In the variation 15...♜e5 16.♙e5 dxe5 17.a5± Black loses his c4-pawn.

It is too risky to play 15...b6, in view of 16.♜d4 ♙b7 17.♜cb5! axb5 18.♜xb5 with more than enough compensation for the piece, for example: 18...♞c8 19.♜xd6 ♞c5 20.♞c1±, or 18...♞c5 19.♙xd6 ♞c8 20.♜a7 ♞d8 21.♜c6 ♞c8 22.♜xb8 ♜xb8 23.♞c2±, or 18...♞d8 19.♜d6 ♜e5 (19...♞f8(e7)? 20.e5!+– ♜e8 21.♜xf7 ♞xf7 22.e6 ♞e7 23.d6 ♞xe6 24.♙xc4+–; 19...♞e5 20.♙xe5 ♜xe5 21.♜xb7 ♞xb7 22.f4±) 20.♜xe8 ♜e8 21.b3! c3 22.♞c1 ♞c8 23.f4 ♜d7 24.e5± (planning ♙c4) and White maintains an overwhelming advantage.

16.a5



Black has great problems with the protection of his c4-pawn. White is threatening ♞a4, ♞a4 and ♜d2.

16...b5 17.axb6 ♞xb6 18.♞a4!?

9.♟f3 a6 10.a4 ♞bd7 11.0-0 ♞e8 12.♞e1 ♞c7 13.♟f4

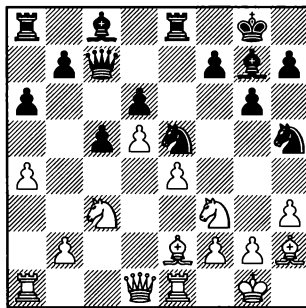
It might be interesting for White to try here 18.g4!? ♞xb2 19.♟a4 ♞b4 20.gxh5 ♟xa1 21.♞xa1 f6 (otherwise 22.e5) 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.♟d4±

18...♞xb2 19.♞xc4 ♞b6 20.♞e3±

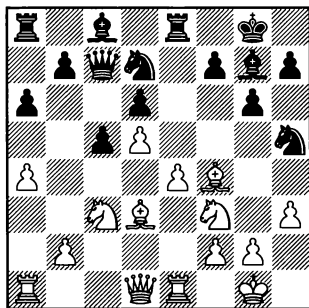
White's threats of ♟a4 and ♞c6 guarantee an advantage and after 20...♟c5 21.♟a4 ♟xa4 22.♞xa4 ♟f6 23.♞c6 ♞b4 (23...♞a7 24.♟xd6!? ♟d7 25.♟e5! ♟xc6 26.dxc6±) 24.♞xb4 ♞b4 25.♟d3 Black's pawns are almost defenceless.

ture: 15.♟e2↑, when the game Bacrot – Nazar, France 2004, continued 15...♟hf6 16.♟d2 ♟f8 17.♟h1 ♟b6?! 18.f4±

15.♟e2!±



E4b) 13...♟h5



Black has problems after this move too.

14.♟h2 ♟e5

14...b6 15.♟e2!? ♟b7 (15...♟h6?! 16.e5 ♟f4 17.e6±; 16...dxe5 17.d6 ♞d8 18.♟xe5±; 17...♞c6?! 18.♟c4±) 16.♟d2 ♟hf6 17.♞c2±

After 14...♞b8 White should continue according to the standard scheme for this pawn struc-

Here are a few examples which deserve great attention:

15...♟xf3+ 16.♟xf3 ♟f6 17.e5! dxe5 18.d6 ♞b6 (18...♞d8 19.♞xe5± Blagojevic – Indjic, Paracin 2011) 19.♟xe5 ♟e6 20.a5! ♞a7 (20...♞b4?! 21.♞a4!? ♞b3 22.♞c1 ♟f5 23.g4 ♞c2 24.♞a1+–; 22...♟d7?! 23.♞f4+–) 21.♞a4± (21.♞c1!?±) 21...♞ed8? (21...♞ad8 22.♞h4 ♟d7 23.♟xg7 ♟xg7 24.♟d5±) 22.♞h4 ♟e8 23.♟xg7 ♟xg7 24.♞xe6! fxe6 25.♞e7+ ♟g8 26.♞xe6+ ♟h8 27.♟d5 ♟g7 (27...♞xd6 28.♞e5+ ♟g8 29.♟e7+ ♟f8 30.♞e1+–) 28.♞e5+– Dreev – Malakhov, Villarrobledo 2007;

15...♞e7 16.a5!? (16.♟d2!?±) 16...♟d7 17.♟xe5 ♟xe5 18.♟xh5 ♟xh2+ 19.♟xh2 ♞e5+ 20.g3 ♞xh5 (20...gxh5?! 21.f4 ♞d4 22.♞f3±) 21.♞xh5 gxh5 22.e5± and White has the initiative: 22...♞xe5 (22...dxe5?! 23.♟e4±) 23.♞xe5 dxe5

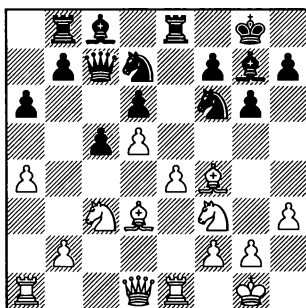
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24. ♖e4 ♙f5?! 25. ♖xc5± Rychagov – Rakhimov, Moscow 1997;

15... ♖f6 16. ♙xe5!? (16. ♖xe5!? dxe5 17. a5±; 16. ♖d2±) 16... dxe5 17. a5 ♙f8 18. ♖d2 ♙d6 19. ♖c4 ♙d7 20. ♖c2 ♖f8 21. ♖a4± Grabarczyk – Schunk, Germany 1995.

E4c) 13... ♖b8

This is Black's most popular move, but I cannot say that it is his best.



14. ♙c4!?

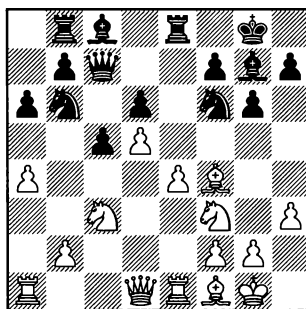
This strong prophylactic move prevents Black's possible counterplay based on c5-c4 and b7-b5, and also aids White in the preparation of his thematic central pawn break e4-e5. It was introduced into tournament practice by Anatoly Karpov in 1990.

14... ♖b6

14... b6?! 15. e5! dxe5 (15... ♖xe5 16. ♙xe5 dxe5 17. d6±) 16. d6 ♖c6 (16... ♖d8? 17. ♙xf7+! ♖xf7 18. ♖g5+ ♖g8 19. ♖b3+-) 17. ♖b3±

White maintains the tension and his positional pressure after 14... ♖h5 15. ♙h2 ♖e5 16. ♙e2! (we have reached a position from variation E4b, but with an extra tempo for Black – his rook is on b8; nevertheless White's position is better) 16... ♖xf3+ 17. ♙xf3 ♖f6 18. e5! dxe5 19. d6± Lima – Peralta, Sao Paulo 1991.

15. ♙f1

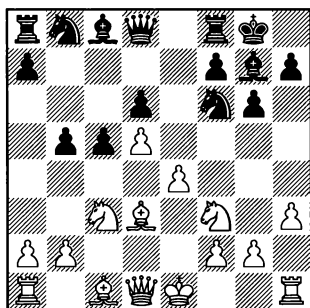


White has a considerable and stable advantage, thanks to his extra space and better piece coordination.

15... ♖fd7 16. ♖c1 (16. a5!? ♖a8 17. ♖d2↑ b5?! 18. axb6 ♖axb6 19. ♙xa6 ♙xa6 20. ♖xa6 ♖e5 21. ♖e2± Karpov – Timman, Kuala Lumpur 1990) 16... ♖e5 17. ♖xe5 ♙xe5 18. ♙xe5 dxe5 (18... ♖xe5 19. f4 ♖e8 20. e5!± dxe5 21. fxe5± ♖xe5? 22. d6 ♖xe1 23. dxc7 ♖xd1 24. cxb8 ♖+-) 19. ♖d2 ♖d7 20. d6 ♖a5 21. ♖ed1± with the initiative and a clear positional advantage for White, Khalifman – Ju. Polgar, Hoogeveen 2000.

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1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0-0 9.♘f3 b5



Black advances b7-b5 without any preparation... I believe this variation to be the most principled way to combat the scheme I am advocating against the Modern Benoni. It is obvious that White must now choose between two ways to continue.

Capturing on b5 with the bishop, if both sides play correctly, leads to numerous exchanges of minor pieces. White temporarily wins a pawn and tries to achieve as many pluses as possible before he has to give it back. There are certain practical disadvantages for Black in this variation. He must play very accurately to maintain the balance, while White can "test out" his opponent with-

out risking anything. The defect of this variation for White is that after the many exchanges it is hard for him to complicate the game and if he plays imprecisely for even a moment, the game may well end in a draw.

White's other option is to capture on b5 with the knight and this leads to a very interesting position in which White can fight for more than a slight edge, but Black is also able to create counterplay.

All in all, it is up to White to choose and much will depend on the style of the player and the tournament situation...

10.♙xb5 ♘xe4 11.♘xe4 ♗a5+ 12.♘fd2

This is the right move.

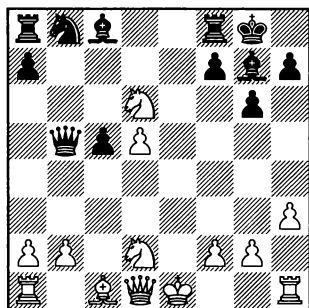
It is inferior for White to try 12.♙d2? ♗xb5 13.♘xd6 ♗xb2+, or 12.♘c3? ♙xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♗xb5+

12...♗xb5 13.♘xd6

(diagram)

13...♗a6

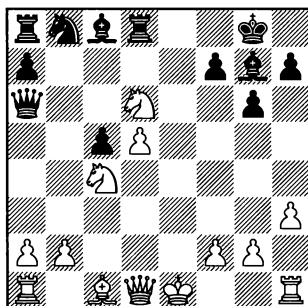
13...♗d3 – This move enables White to exchange the queens, after which Black will have difficulty in gaining enough compensa-



tion for the pawn. 14. ♖c4 ♗xd1+ 15. ♗xd1 ♖d7 (after 15... ♗d7 16. ♗e3 ♖a6 17. ♗e2, White gains the advantage after 17... ♗fb8 18. ♗ab1 ♖b4 19. ♗bd1! ♖xa2 20. ♗d2, or 17... ♗a4 18. b3!? ♗xa1 19. ♗xa1 ♗d7 20. ♗d1, intending ♖a5, with more than sufficient compensation for the exchange) 16. ♗g5!? ♗a6 17. ♗c2 ♖e5 18. ♖xe5 ♗xe5 19. ♖e4 ♗ab8 20. ♖c3 ♗c8 (20... ♗d4 21. ♗e3 ♗c8 22. b3 ♗d8 23. ♗ad1 ♗f5+ 24. ♗b2 ♗xd5 25. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 26. ♗xd4 cxd4 27. ♖e2 ♗d8 28. ♗d1 d3 29. ♖c3 ♗g7 30. ♗c1±) 21. g4 f5 22. ♗ae1 and White maintains the advantage after 22... ♗xc3 23. ♗xc3, or 22... ♗d4 23. ♗e7 ♗f7 24. ♗d6 ♗b6 25. ♗e8+ ♗g7 26. ♗xc5.

White is also better at the end of another rarely played line: 13... ♗d7 14. ♖c4 ♗e7+ (14... ♗a6?! 15. 0-0 ♗d4 16. ♗f3 ♗d8 17. ♗e1+-) 15. ♗e3 ♗xb2 16. ♖xb2 (16. 0-0!? ♗xa1 17. ♗xa1) 16... ♗xd6 17. ♖c4 ♗a6 18. ♗c1 and in view of the weakness of the dark squares in Black's camp, his position is considerably worse.

14. ♖c4 ♗d8



15. ♗f4

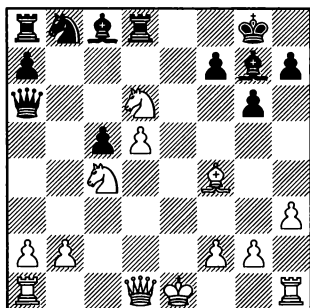
15. ♖xc8? ♗xc4±

It looks tempting for White to play 15. ♗e2 but after Black's only good move 15... ♗b7! (it is bad to play 15... ♗xd6? 16. ♗e8+ ♗f8 17. ♖xd6 ♗xd6 18. ♗xc8 ♗xd5 19. 0-0+- Khagai – Wong Meng Leong, Singapore 1998; or 15... ♗f8 16. ♖e8! ♗xd5 17. ♖c7±) 16. ♖xb7 (16. ♗e7? ♗d7! 17. ♗e8+ ♗f8+-) 16... ♗xb7, he regains his pawn and the position is approximately equal.

After 15. ♗e2, instead of 15... ♗b7! Black has tried the move 15... ♖d7, when White's best response is 16. ♗e7!N (this queen invasion is weaker after the inclusion of the moves 16. ♗g5 ♖f6 and only now – 17. ♗e7, because of 17... ♗d7 18. ♗e5, Andueza – Caceres Vasquez, Santiago de Chile 2007, 18... ♖xd5! – this spectacular piece sacrifice is very unpleasant for White! 19. ♗xd5 ♗b7 20.

10. ♖xb5 ♜xe4 11. ♜xe4 ♜a5 12. ♜fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♜xd6 ♜a6 14. ♜2c4

♜xc5 ♖xg2 21. ♖g1 ♖f3 and Black has a very strong initiative) 16... ♖f8 17. 0-0 ♜b6 18. ♜xb6 (it also seems good for White to continue quietly with 18. ♜e3!? ♜d7 19. ♜e4 ♜b5 20. ♜d1 ♜d7 21. ♜xc5 ♜xc5 22. ♜xc5 ♖fc8 23. ♜b4 ♖ab8 24. ♜f4±) 18... axb6 19. ♖e1 (it might look very good for White to play 19. ♜e8 here, but Black can equalise with a surprising queen sacrifice: 19... ♜xf1+! 20. ♜xf1 ♖a6+ 21. ♜g1 ♖axe8! 22. ♜h4 ♖e1+ 23. ♜h2 ♜d4 and his prospects are not at all worse.) 19... ♖a7 (19... ♜d3?! 20. ♖g5 ♖xb2?? 21. ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 22. ♖h6+ ♖g7 23. ♖e8#; even after Black's best line: 20... ♜xd5 21. ♖ad1 ♜c6 22. a3, his position is clearly worse, for example: 22... ♜a4 23. ♖f6±, or 22... ♖xb2? 23. ♖h6 ♖g7 24. ♖xg7 ♜xg7 25. ♜e5+ ♜g8 26. ♜xf7! ♜xf7 27. ♜e7+ ♜g8 28. ♖d8+-) 20. ♜h4 ♜a4 21. ♖f4! ♖xb2 22. ♖ab1± with the idea of countering 22... ♖c3? with 23. ♜e4!+-



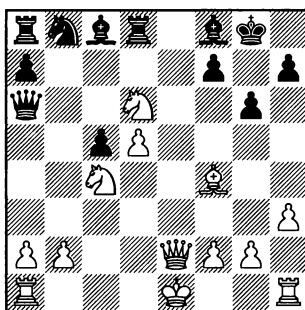
Now Black should choose between **A) 15... ♖f8** and **B) 15... ♜d7**.

His alternatives are clearly worse:

15... ♜xd6? 16. ♜xd6 ♖xb2 17. ♜xc8 ♜xc8 (17... ♖c3+ 18. ♖d2 ♖xa1 19. ♜xa1 ♜xc8 20. ♖h6+-) 18. ♖b1+-;

or 15... g5? 16. ♖g3 (White does not need to retreat to h2) 16... f5. This move is consistent but bad. However, Black's real mistake was made earlier... (16... ♜xd6? 17. ♜xd6 ♖xb2 18. ♜f3! f5 19. ♖b1+-) 17. ♜h5! f4 18. 0-0 ♜xd6 (18... fxc3 19. ♖ae1 ♖f8 20. fxc3+-) 19. ♜e8+ ♖f8 20. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 21. ♜xc8+-

A) 15... ♖f8 16. ♜e2!



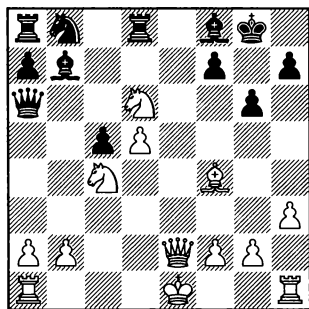
16... ♖b7

16... ♜xd6 17. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 (17... ♜a5+ 18. ♜d2±) 18. ♜e8+ (18. ♜xd6? ♜xd6 19. ♜e8+ ♜f8±) 18... ♜g7 19. ♖e5+ ♖f6 20. ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 21. ♜xc8±

After 16... ♜d7 a very good continuation White is 17. ♖g5! (17. ♜xc8?! ♖axc8= Shengelia – Pantsulaia, Tbilisi 2002; 17. 0-0? ♜b6= and he will be forced to give

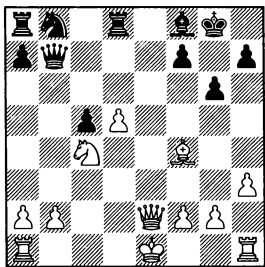
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back the pawn), for example: 17... ♙xd6 (if 17...f6? 18. ♜e6+ –; or 17... ♙b7 18. ♙xd8 ♙xd6 and White's simplest reply is 19. ♞xd6 ♜xd6 20. ♙e7 ♜xd5 21. f3 ♞e8 22. ♞d1 ♜c6 23. ♞f2 , gaining a decisive advantage) 18. ♙xd8 ♞e5 19. ♞xe5 ♜xe2+ 20. ♞xe2 ♙a6+ 21. ♞f3 ♙xe5 22. ♞a1 f6 23. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 24. ♞e6+ – Leitao – Van Riemsdijk, Rio Claro 1998.



17. ♞d1

Here White has also tried 17. ♞xb7 ♜xb7



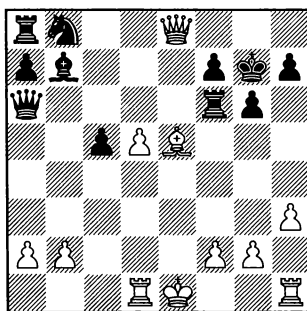
and now:

18. 0–0 ♞d7 (18... ♞xd5 ? 19. ♞a5! ♞xd1+ 20. ♞xd1 ♜xg2 21. ♞d8+ –) 19. ♞he1 (it is also interesting to try 19. ♞a5! ? ♜b6 20. ♞c6

♞e8 21. ♜c4 ♜b7 and Black gains only minimal compensation for the pawn, Schandorff – E. Berg, Copenhagen 2007) 19... ♞b6 20. ♞a5 ♜d7 (the position arising after 20. d6!? ♜xg2 is very unclear) 21. ♞c6 ♞e8 22. ♜d2 (but not 22. ♞e5 in view of ♜a4) 22... ♞xe1 23. ♞xe1 ♞xd5 (23... ♜xd5! ? 24. ♜xd5 ♞xd5 25. ♙d2 ♞c8 26. ♞xa7 ♞a8 27. ♞c6 ♞xa2 28. ♞e8 ♞g7 29. ♞d8 ♞a6 30. ♞xd5 ♞xc6 31. ♙c3+ ♞g8=) 24. ♞e5 ♜xc6 25. ♜xd5 ♜c8= ;

White achieves nothing concrete with the natural move 18. 0–0 ♞d5 19. ♞ad1 (19. ♜f3 ♞d7 20. ♜xb7 ♞xb7 21. ♞fe1 ♞c6 22. ♞ad1±) 19... ♞xd1 20. ♞xd1 ♞c6 21. ♜e4 ♞d8 22. ♞xd8 ♞xd8 23. ♜xb7 ♞xb7± and although he is still a bit better, the most probable outcome of the game is a draw, Cheng – Mousavi, Kemer 2009.

17... ♙xd6 18. ♞xd6 ♞xd6 19. ♜e8+ ♞g7 20. ♙e5+ ♞f6



21. f4!

21. ♜e7 ? ♙c8 22. ♙xf6+ ♜xf6 23. ♜xc5 ♙a6 24. ♜c3 ♞d7 25. ♜xf6+ ♞xf6 26. ♞d2 ♞d8 27. f3,

10. ♖xb5 ♜xe4 11. ♜xe4 ♖a5 12. ♜fd2 ♖xb5 13. ♜xd6 ♖a6 14. ♜2c4

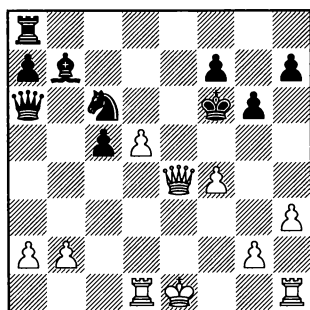
draw, Lemos – Meza, Tandil 2003.

21... ♜c6

Black has great problems after 21... ♖a5+ 22. ♖c3 ♖b6 23. ♖e7+–

If 21... h6, White plays 22. ♖d2! – an excellent prophylactic move; he should be in no hurry to play g2-g4. It is far from clear how Black will untie his pieces; (after the immediate 22.g4, White's king will become rather insecure: 22... ♜c6 23. ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 24. ♖e3 ♜g7) 22... ♖b6 23. 0–0 and now after 23... ♜a6 White has the strong move 24. ♖e7, while if 23... a5 then White plays 24.f5 g5 25. ♖e1+–

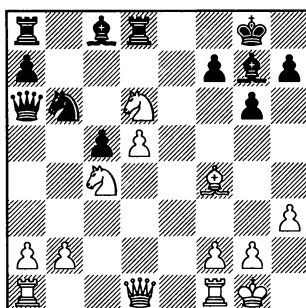
22. ♖xf6+ ♜xf6 23. ♖e4



Black's knight cannot escape in view of the checkmate on e5.

23... ♜g7 24. dxc6 ♖xc6 25. ♖c2± – Black has no compensation for the exchange (it is inferior for White to play here 25. ♖e5+? here because of 25... ♜g8∞).

B) 15... ♜d7 16. 0–0 ♜b6 16... ♜f6? 17. ♖f3±



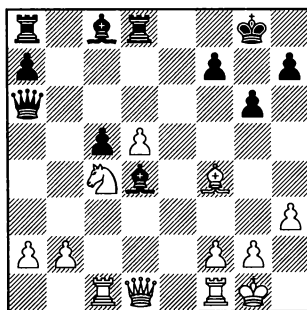
Now White has two promising lines: **B1) 17. ♖c1** and **B2) 17. ♜xb6**.

B1) 17. ♖c1 ♜xc4

Black fails to solve his problems with 17... ♜d4? 18. ♜e3! ♖xa2 (18... ♜a4 19. b4! ♜c3 20. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 21. bxc5+–) 19. b4!? (19. ♖f3!?±) 19... ♜xd5 20. ♜xd5 ♖d5 21. ♖xc5 ♖xd6 22. ♖xd5±

18. ♜xc4 ♜d4

After 18... ♖xa2?! 19. ♖c7! ♖d7 20. d6 White's powerful passed pawn provides him with a clear positional advantage.



19. ♖e1!N

This new move enables White

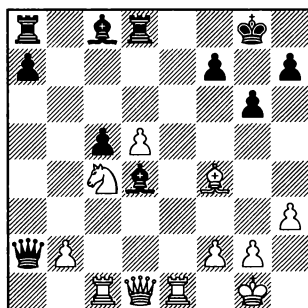
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to look to the future with optimism.

White continued feebly with 19.d6?! ♖e6 20.b3 (20.♘d2!?) 20...♗xa2, draw, in Bykhovsky – Chitadze, playchess.com 2006.

19...♗xa2

After 19...♖b7 20.d6 ♗xa2 (20...♗d5 21.♘e3 ♖e6 22.b4±) 21.♗e7!? (21.♗g5!? ♗d7 22.♗e7) 21...♗d5 22.♘e3 Black is in a very dangerous position, for example: 22...♗b3 23.♘xd5 ♗xd5 24.♗d2± intending 25.♗ce1↑; or 22...♖e6 23.b4!+–; or 22...♖b3 23.♗f3 ♗xb2 24.♘g4 ♗f8 25.♘h6+ ♔g7 26.♗e2 ♗a3 27.♗b1 c4 28.♗e7+–



20.♗e7!

The tempting move 20.♗g5 proves less effective after 20...♖a6! (20...♗xd5? 21.♗e8+ ♔g7 22.♗d2) 21.♗xd8 ♗xd8 22.♘e3 ♗xb2 23.♗b1 ♗c3 (23...♗a2 24.♗f3 ♔g7 25.♗bd1±). Of course, White still has an edge, but Black has drawing chances. 24.♗f3 (24.♗b3 ♗a5 25.♗c1!±; 24.♗g4!?) 24...♗d3 25.♗ec1 ♗d2 (after 25...♗a5? 26.♗b7+– White seizes the initiative) 26.♗d1 ♗e2 27.♗xe2 ♗xe2 28.♗d2

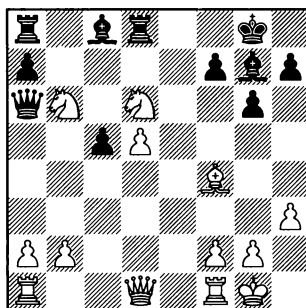
♖a6 29.♗b3 ♔g7 30.♗a3 ♗d6 31.g4 – White has an extra exchange for a pawn, but exploiting this will not be at all easy.

20...♖a6

20...♖e6 21.dxe6! ♗xf2+ 22.♔xf2 ♗xd1 23.exf7+ ♔g7 24.♗xd1 ♗xc4 25.♖e5+ ♔h6 26.♔g1+–

21.♘e3!↑ White's initiative is tremendously dangerous, for example: 21...♗xb2 22.♘g4 ♗f8 23.♗b1 ♗a2 24.♖e5 ♗xe5 25.♘xe5 ♖e2 26.♗c1 ♗xd5 27.♗b2+–

B2) 17.♘xb6!?

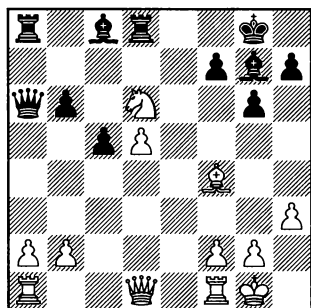


17...axb6

17...♗xb6 18.♘xc8 (it is inferior for White to play 18.♘c4 ♗b7 19.d6 ♗e4 20.♗g5 f6 21.♘d2 ♗d4 22.♖e3 ♗xd6 23.♘e4 ♗b6, because now, after 24.♗a4, Black can play 24...♗d7, while after 24.♗c2 ♖f5 Black's position is quite playable, for example: 25.♗c4+ ♖e6 26.♗xc5 ♗xb2. White played a dubious alternative 20.♗f3?! ♗xf3 21.gxf3 ♗xh3 22.

10. ♖xb5 ♜xe4 11. ♜xe4 ♜a5 12. ♜fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♜xd6 ♜a6 14. ♜2c4

♜fd1 ♜e6 in Schlosser – Forster, Lippstadt 1995) 18... ♜axc8. Here he can manage without the move ♜b1: 19.d6! (for 19. ♜b1 – see 10... ♜d7) 19... ♜d7 (19... ♜xb2 20. ♜b1+; 19... ♜c6 20. ♜d2 ♜b8 21. ♜a5 ♜b6 22. ♜xb6 and now, after 22... ♜xb6, White can play 23. ♜ac1± and if 22...axb6, then – 23. ♜ab1±) 20. ♜c1 ♜f8 21. ♜a4 (21. ♜g4!?) 21... ♜c6 22.b4 ♜xd6 23. ♜e3±



18. ♜b3

I think this is White's best move.

18. ♜f3!? b5!∞

After 18. ♜d2 b5! (18... ♜a7? 19. ♜fe1 ♜ad7 20. ♜e8+ ♜xe8 21. ♜xe8 ♜d4 22. ♜e1 h5 23. ♜e5 1-0 Blagojevic – Ljubicic, Bar 2007) 19. ♜xc8 ♜xc8! 20.d6 ♜f5 21. ♜g3 ♜e5 Black should manage to equalise.

It is dubious for White to opt for 18. ♜xc8?!, since Black can re-

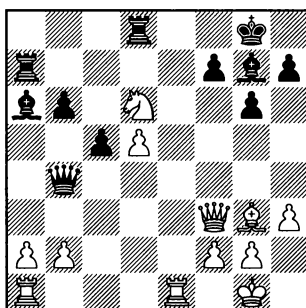
ply either with 18... ♜xc8 19.d6 ♜f5 20. ♜d2 ♜xb2= Flumbort – Vargyas, Kaposvar 1999, or 18... ♜axc8 19.d6 (19. ♜d2 ♜d7 20. ♜fd1 b5 21. ♜e2 c4 22.a3 ♜a8 23. ♜g4 f5 24. ♜e2 ♜e8 25. ♜d2 ♜e4 26.d6, draw, Medina Fontes -Papadopoulos, Moron 2003) 19... ♜xb2 20. ♜b1 ♜d4∞ Jedynak – Adamowski, Straszecin 1999.

18... ♜a4

18... ♜f8? 19. ♜e4 ♜g7 20. ♜g5± Suttor – Stojic, Mount Buller 2005.

18... ♜b7 19. ♜fd1±

19. ♜g3 ♜b4 20. ♜f3 ♜a7 21. ♜fe1 ♜a6

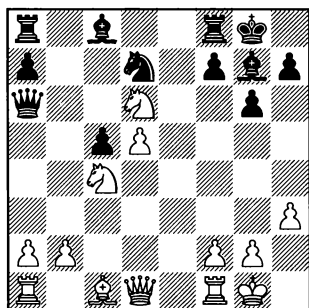


22. ♜e8!± and White's initiative can become very dangerous, for example: 22... ♜b2 23. ♜ab1 ♜c3 24. ♜e3+–

His initiative is also strong after 22. ♜e4 ♜xb2 23. ♜ae1↑ T. Gubayduln – Golizadeh, Tashkent 2007.

Chapter 10

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0-0 9.♘f3 b5 10.♙xb5 ♘xe4 11.♘xe4
♚a5+ 12.♘fd2 ♚xb5 13.♘xd6 ♚a6
14.♘2c4 ♘d7 15.0-0



15...♘e5

Black plays 15...♘b6 slightly more often, and this will be analysed in the next chapter.

Both these moves are played with the idea of preventing White from consolidating his advantage, but Black has fewer possibilities after 15...♘e5 and following the exchange of the minor pieces his bishop ends up on the e5-square, which is in White's favour.

We shall analyse now: **A) 16.♘xe5** and **B) 16.♘xc8**.

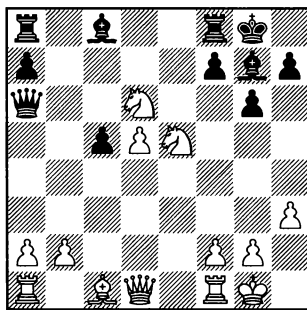
The alternatives for White are all weaker:

16.♚c2?! ♘xc4 17.♘xc4 ♙f5+;
16.♚b3 ♘xc4 (16...♙d7? 17.♙f4

♙a4 18.♚c3± Kishnev – Ross-
kothen, Muenster 1990; it is even
stronger to play 18.♙xe5! ♙xe5
19.♚b7) 17.♘xc4 ♙b7=;

16.♚e2 ♙d8 17.♙f4 ♘xc4 18.
♘xc4 ♙xd5= X.Wang – Z.Zhang,
Manila 2008.

A) 16.♘xe5

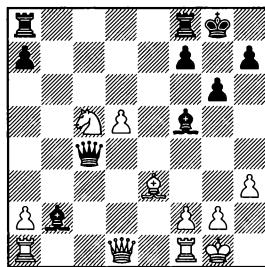
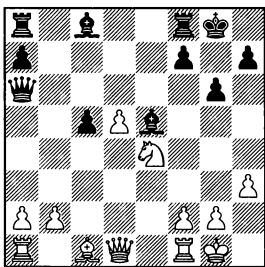


16...♚xd6!

This is Black's most precise move and it enables him to fight for equality.

It is slightly weaker for him to play 16...♙xe5 17.♘e4!? (17.♘xc8 – see variation B).

11. ♖xe4 ♖a5 12. ♖fd2 ♖xb5 13. ♖xd6 ♖a6 14. ♖2c4 ♖d7 15. 0-0 ♖e5

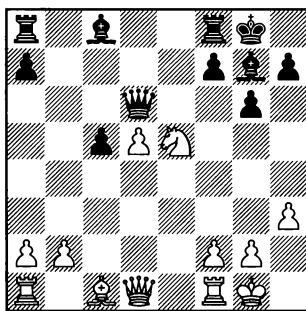


17... ♖d8 18. ♗g5 f6 19. d6! ♗g7 20. ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 21. ♖xf6 ♗f5. Here, instead of the prosaic move 22. ♖g4±, it would be very good for White to play 22. ♖f3!, and Black's position is very difficult after 22... ♖xd6 23. ♖h5+ or 22... ♗xf6 23. ♖ad1 ♖ac8 (23... ♗g7 24. ♖fe1+–) 24. g4 ♖xd6 25. gxf5 gxf5? 26. ♖f4+–

17... c4 18. ♖e1 ♗f5 (it is too risky for Black to play 18... ♖b8? 19. ♗h6!±, since he will suffer from the weakness of the dark squares in his camp) and now White has a choice between going into an endgame with an extra pawn where Black has good drawing chances: 19. g4 ♗xe4 20. ♖xe4 ♗g7 21. ♖e2 ♖ad8 22. ♖xc4 ♖xc4 23. ♖xc4 ♖xd5 24. a4±; and the more accurate move 19. ♖f3!, and White maintains an advantage after 19... ♖ad8 20. ♖g3 ♗xg3 21. ♖xg3 ♖xd5 22. ♗h6 ♖fd8 23. ♖ac1 ♖5d7 24. b3!± or 19... ♗g7 20. ♗g5! ♗xb2 21. ♖ad1↑

17... ♗f5 18. ♖xc5 ♖c4 (18... ♖d6 19. ♖a4±; 18... ♖b5? 19. ♗e3 ♖xb2 20. ♖c1 ♖ad8 21. g4 ♗c8 22. ♖d3 ♖b8 23. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 24. ♗h6 ♖fe8 25. ♖e1±) 19. ♗e3 ♗xb2

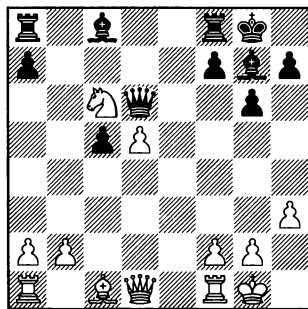
20. ♖d2! (the attractive move 20. g4!? led to a draw in the game L.Seres – Ovsejevitch, Budapest 2003: 20... ♗xa1 21. ♖xa1 ♗xg4 22. ♖c1 ♖e2 23. ♗h6 f6 24. ♗xf8 ♖xf8 25. hxg4 ♖xg4+, draw; it was stronger for White to play 23. ♖e4!? ♗h3? 24. ♖f6+ ♗h8 25. ♗h2!+–; 23... f6 24. hxg4 ♖xg4 25. ♖g3±, planning 25... h5 26. ♖d4±, or 25... ♖ad8 26. ♖c5±) 20... ♗xa1 21. ♖xa1 and White has more than enough compensation for the exchange, for example: 21... ♖fd8 22. d6±



17. ♖c6

It is too risky to play 17. ♖c4?! ♖a6 18. ♖b3 (18. ♖e3 – this passive move has been tried in sev-

eral games, but it does not offer White good prospects and Black's position is at least not worse after 18...♙b7 or 18...♚b8 and, if necessary, he can continue with f7-f5. White does not achieve much with 18.♚e2 either, for example 18...♙b7 19.♖d1 ♙d4 20.♙e3 ♙xd5 21.♚ac1 ♙xe3 22.fxe3 ♚ad8 23. b3=, or 18...♚b8!? 19.♚e1 ♚b4 20. ♘e3 ♚e8= K.Badnev – E.Janev, Plovdiv 2010) 18...♙b7 (18...♙d7 19.♙f4 ♙a4 20.♚d3 ♙b5 21.♚ac1 ♚xa2 22.b3± Granda Zuniga – H.Mecking, Sao Paulo 2003) 19. ♖d1 ♙d4 20.♘e3 and Black is already slightly better, but he decided not to risk anything and agreed to a draw, Wang Yue – Gashimov, Kallithea 2008.



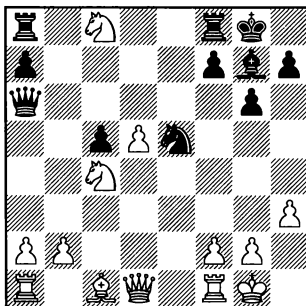
17...♙d7

It is inferior for Black to play 17...♙a6?! 18.♚e1 ♚fe8 19.♙g5! ♙xb2 20.♚b1 ♚xe1+ 21.♚xe1 ♙g7 22.♚e4± but he can try to equalise with the line 17...♙b7 18.♚a4 ♙xc6 19.dxc6 ♚ac8 and his active bishop on g7 more than compensates for Black's pawn weaknesses on the queenside.

18.♙g5 ♙xc6 19.dxc6 ♚xc6
20.♚c2 ♚ab8 21.♚ab1 c4= Pop-
 ilsky – Flumbort, Haarlem 2010.

B) 16.♘xc8

This is White's best move.



16...♚axc8

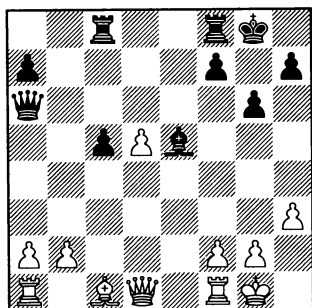
16...♘xc4? 17.♘e7+ ♙h8 18. ♚e2+-

16...♚xc4?! 17.♘e7+ ♙h8 18. b3!? (18.♙e3 ♘d3 19.♚d2 ♚e4 20. f3 ♚xe7 21.♚xd3± Epishin – T. Horvath, Frankfurt 1990) 18... ♚a6 19.♙b2 ♚d6 20.f4 ♘d7 (20... ♘f3+ 21.♚xf3 ♙xb2 22.♚ae1±) 21. ♚e2 ♚fe8 22.♚fe1 ♙d4+ 23. ♙xd4+ cxd4 24.♚e4 ♘f6 25.♚e5 ♚ad8 26.♚ad1±

Black still has problems after 16...♚fxc8 17.♘xe5 ♙xe5 18.♚e1 ♚d6 19.♚b1!? ♖d8. The difference between this and the variation **B2** is that there Black's queen's rook has already occupied the c8-square. 20.♙g5±

17.♘xe5 ♙xe5

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♘fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♘xd6 ♜a6 14. ♘2c4 ♘d7 15. 0-0 ♘e5



Now we shall analyse two possibilities for White: **B1) 18. ♜f3!?** and **B2) 18. ♞e1**.

Here 18. ♞h6 is harmless: 18... ♞fe8 (18... ♞fd8!?) 19. ♜d2 ♜b7 20. ♞fe1 ♜xb2 21. ♜xb2 ♞xb2 22. ♞xe8+ ♞xe8 23. ♞b1 ♞e5, with a complicated and approximately equal endgame, Leko – Alekseev, Astrakhan 2010.

B1) 18. ♜f3!?

This is a very interesting move, after which Black has numerous options, but although the position is objectively nearly equal, White can create problems for his opponent, of a practical nature at least.

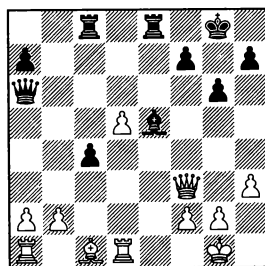
18... ♞fd8!

Black does not win the exchange with 18... ♞h2+? 19. ♘xh2 ♜xf1 since after 20. ♞h6 he will have to give it back.

18... ♞d4?! 19. ♞e1 (this move is much stronger than 19. ♞d1, S. Vidit – A.Gabrielian, Pardubice

2010) 19... ♞fe8 20. ♞f4 ♞xb2 21. ♞ad1 ♞d4 22. d6±

18... ♞fe8 19. ♞d1!? (but not 19. ♞b1? ♞h2+ 20. ♘xh2 ♜xf1 21. ♜f6 ♜d1 22. ♞h6 ♜d4+, or 21. d6 ♞cd8 22. ♜f6 ♜d3 23. ♞f4 ♜d4+, Andonovski – Jianu, Tivat 2011) 19...c4!? (thanks to his passed d5-pawn, White retains some chances of fighting for an advantage after 19... ♞d4, for example: 20. ♞f4!? ♞xb2 21. ♞ab1 ♜xa2 22. d6 ♞cd8 23. ♞g3!? ♞d4 24. ♞b7↑, but it looks likely that Black will survive; or 20. ♞b1? ♜xa2 21. ♞f4!? ♞xb2 22. d6 ♞cd8 23. ♘h2↑; 20... ♞e5 21. ♞f4 ♞e2?! 22. ♞e3± Ratkovic – Debevec, Paracin 2012; or 22. ♞g3!? and Black is faced with new problems; but after the accurate move 21... ♞f5 White exerts only minimal pressure: 22. d6 ♞d8 23. ♜e4±)



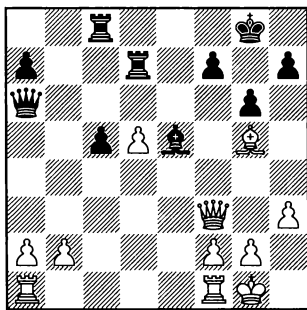
20. a4!? (it might be interesting for White to try the move 20. ♞b1!? ♜xa2 21. ♞d2!? ♞xb2 22. d6 c3?! 23. ♞xc3 ♞xc3 24. d7 ♞d8 25. ♜e2 ♜e6 26. ♜xb2 ♞c7 27. ♜b8 ♞cxd7 28. ♜xd8±, but with 22... ♞cd8 23. ♞c3 ♞xc3 24. ♞b7 ♞f8 25. ♜xc3 ♜a6 26. ♜b4 c3 27. ♞c7 ♜b6= Black can equalise) 20...

♖b7, Shengelia – Gashimov, Novi Sad 2009, 21.♙h6!?↑

It might be interesting for White to test 19.♙f4! with the idea of 19...♞cd8 20.♙g5! f6 21.♙e3 ♟xb2 22.♞ad1↑

19.♙g5 ♞d7!

It is weaker for Black to play 19...f6 20.♞ae1!? (another good continuation is 20.♙f4 ♟xf4 21.♞xf4 ♞xd5 22.♞ad1±, emphasizing the drawbacks of Black's 19th move – weakening his king position and the f6-pawn, J.Hernando – Munoz Pantoja, Barcelona 2005) 20...♞d6 21.♞xe5 ♞xe5 22.♙xf6 ♞xd5 23.♙xd8 ♞xf3 24.gxf3 ♞xd8 25.♞c1±; of course, Black has good chances of a draw, but he will have to fight long and hard for it...



20.♞ad1!?

20.♞fe1 ♞d6! White can do nothing to prevent Black from regaining the d5-pawn with equality. (20...♟xb2!? 21.♞ab1 ♙g7 22.♞e7 ♞xe7 23.♙xe7 c4? 24.d6+-; 23...♙f8! 24.♙f6 ♙g7=; 24.♞e1 ♞e8

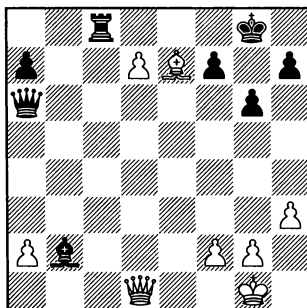
25.d6 ♞xd6 26.♙xd6 ♞xe1+ 27.♙h2 ♙xd6+ 28.g3 ♙e5 29.♞a8+ ♙g7 30.♞xa7 and while White has won his opponent's queen, he is unlikely to win the game – 30...♙d4=) 21.♞ad1 ♙d4 22.♞d2 (22.b4 ♞xd5 23.♞g4 h5 24.♞f4 ♞c6 25.bxc5 ♞xc5=) 22...♞xd5 23.♞f4 ♞d6 24.♞h4 h5 25.♞de2 ♙g7=

20...♟xb2

Black should refrain from trying to win the enemy d5-pawn: 20...♙d4 21.b4! ♞c4 22.bxc5 ♞xd5 23.♙f6 (23.♙e7!?±) 23...♞xc5 24.♙h1±

20...♞d6 21.♞d2!? ♙d4 22.b4 ♞xd5 23.♞xd5 ♞xd5 24.♙e3 ♞e5 25.♙xd4 cxd4 26.♞xd4±

21.♞fe1 c4 22.♞e7 ♞xe7 23.♙xe7 c3 24.d6 c2 25.d7 cxd1♞+ 26.♞xd1



26...h5!

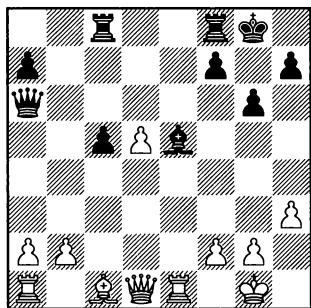
It is essential for Black to free the h7-square for his king.

26...♙g7? 27.♞d2 ♙e5 28.d8♞ ♞xd8 29.♞xd8±

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♖fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♖xd6 ♜a6 14. ♖2c4 ♖d7 15. 0-0 ♖e5

27. ♖d2 ♖a1 and Black reaches complete equality.

B2) 18. ♖e1



In the diagram position we shall analyse the following moves: **B2a) 18... ♖f6**, **B2b) 18... ♖fe8** and **B2c) 18... ♖d6!**

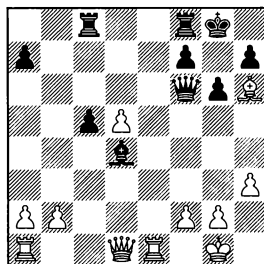
After 18... ♖d4 19. ♖f3, there is a transposition to a variation which is favourable for White – see 18. ♖f3 ♖d4 19. ♖e1.

B2a) 18... ♖f6 19. ♖g4

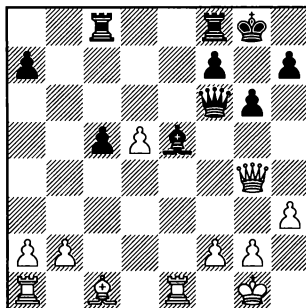
19. ♖b1!? ♖fd8 20. ♖g4 (20. b3 ♖d4= S.Atalik – D.Velimirovic, Herceg Novi 1999) 20... ♖d4 (20... h5 21. ♖e4± D.Fridman – M.Hoffmann, Ohrid 2009) 21. ♖g5 ♖xf2+ 22. ♖h1 h5 23. ♖e4 ♖d7 24. d6 ♖f6 (24... ♖xd6 25. ♖f1 ♖g3 26. ♖b7 ♖xg5 27. ♖xc8±) 25. ♖f4↑

19. ♖h6 ♖d4! (it is weaker to play 19... ♖fd8 when White should play, not 20. ♖d2?! ♖xb2 21. ♖g5

♖c3=, but 20. ♖g4!, for example 20... ♖d6: 21. ♖ad1 ♖xb2 22. ♖f4 ♖d7 23. d6±, or 21. ♖e2 ♖xd5 22. ♖ae1 f6. In the game V.Neverov – Ovsejevitch, Alushta 2003, White obtained an edge after 23. f4 f5 24. ♖h4 ♖d4+ 25. ♖h2 ♖f6 26. ♖g5±, but it is even stronger to play 23. ♖f4!±, or 23. ♖d2!± with the idea of 23... ♖xa2? 24. ♖d7 f5 25. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 26. ♖xh4 ♖c7 27. g3!+–; 23... ♖f7 24. ♖ed1±)



20. ♖c2 (20. ♖xf8 ♖xf2+ 21. ♖h1 ♖xe1 22. ♖xe1 ♖xf8 23. ♖d1 ♖d6= K.Georgiev – Delchev, Sunny Beach 2009) 20... ♖fd8 21. ♖e4 ♖xd5 22. ♖ae1 ♖dd8 23. b3 a6!? White's position is more pleasant, but he will find it hard to achieve anything substantial, for example: 24. ♖1e2 ♖c6 25. g3.



19...♔d4

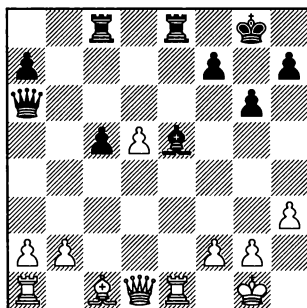
19...h5!? 20.♖c4 (20.♗g5 ♕xb2 21.♖b1 ♔d4= Y.Shulman – D.Boskovic, Reykjavik 2010) 20... ♖fd8 21.♔e3 (21.♖e2 ♗f5 planning 22...♖xd5) 21...♕xb2 22.♖ad1!?±; it would be weaker for White to play 22.♖ab1 ♔d4 23.♖bd1 ♖e8 24. ♔xd4 ♖xe1+ 25.♖xe1 ♗xd4 26. ♗xd4 cxd4 27.♖d1 ♖c4 28.d6 ♔f8 29.♖e1 ♖c8 30.♖e5 ♖e8 31.♖d5 ♖e1+ 32.♔h2 ♔e8 33.♖xd4 ♖e2=

20.♔f4

20.♖e2!? h5 21.♗e4± D.Blagojevic – A.Kovacevic, Ulcinj 1997.

20...h5 21.♗g3 ♕xb2 22. ♖ab1 ♔d4 23.d6±

B2b) 18...♖fe8



19.♔g5

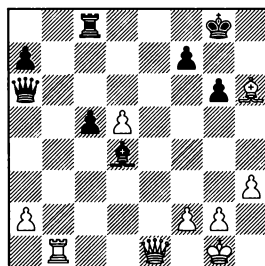
19.d6 ♖cd8!? (19...♗xd6 20. ♗xd6 ♔xd6 21.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22. ♔e3= J.Gonzalez – Krumpacnik, Budapest 1995) 20.d7 ♖e7 21.♔g5 ♖exd7 22.♗c2 ♔f6=

19.♔h6 ♕xb2! (after 19...♗f6? 20.♗a4! ♖ed8 21.♖e2 ♖xd5 22. ♖ae1 Black has serious problems owing to the weakness of his back rank and the attempt to correct this with the pseudo-active move 22...g5 leads after 23.♔xg5 ♗xg5 24.♖xe5 ♖xe5 25.♖xe5 ♗xe5 26. ♗g4+ to a very difficult queen and pawn ending for Black; it is weaker for White to continue with 20.♗d2 ♔d4 21.♖ad1 ♖ed8 22.♔g5 ♔xf2+ 23.♗xf2 ♗xg5± G.Vescovi – A.Fier, Americana 2009) 20. ♖b1 ♔d4 21.♗f3 ♖cd8=

19...♔d4

19...♗d6 20.♖b1 – see 18...♗d6 19.♔g5 ♖fe8.

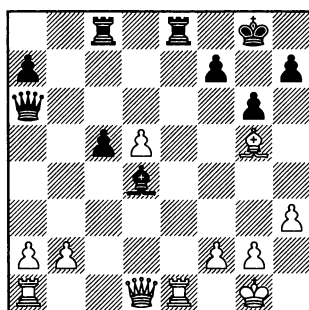
19...h6 20.♔xh6 (it is better for White to choose here 20.d6!? for example, if now 20...♔h2+ then not 21.♔xh2?! ♖xe1 22.♗xe1 ♗xd6= but 21.♔h1 ♔xd6 22.♔xh6 ♔e5 23.♗c2±) 20...♕xb2 21.♖b1 ♖xe1+ 22.♗xe1 ♔d4



Now after 23.♔e3 ♔xe3 24. ♗xe3 ♗xa2 25.♖d1 ♗a4 26.♖c1 c4 27.♗d4 ♗a6 Black is close to achieving a draw.

11. ♖xe4 ♖a5 12. ♖fd2 ♖xb5 13. ♖xd6 ♖a6 14. ♖2c4 ♖d7 15. 0-0 ♖e5

After 23. ♖g5 he can still make a draw but only if he plays both with extreme precision and very sharply: 23... ♖xa2! (23... ♖d6? 24. ♖e4± Bareev – Vera Gonzalez, Novi Sad 1990) 24. d6 ♖xf2+ 25. ♖xf2 ♖xb1+ 26. ♖h2 ♖d3 27. ♖f6 ♖b8 28. ♖e7. This is the only move (28. h4?? ♖d4 29. ♖xd4 cxd4 30. d7 d3–) 28... ♖b3 29. ♖f4 ♖f5 30. ♖e5 ♖xh3=



20. ♖f4!?

White ensures the safety of his d-pawn by preparing its advance.

He has a wide choice of possibilities in this position and although it is not easy to obtain a big advantage, nevertheless he has much the easier game. It is an ordeal to play this position with Black, since a single inaccurate move can end in disaster. It is also worth remembering that White has an extra pawn, after all...

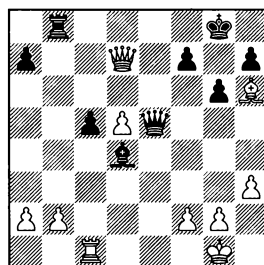
20. ♖e7 ♖xf2+ 21. ♖xf2 ♖xe7 22. ♖xe7 ♖f6+ 23. ♖f3 ♖xe7 24. ♖d1 ♖d8 25. ♖f4 ♖g7 26. b3 ♖f6 27. ♖g3 ♖c3+ 28. ♖h2 ♖f6= A. Po-

tapov – P. Simacek, Pardubice 2010.

20. ♖f3 ♖xb2 21. ♖ad1 ♖d6 22. ♖f4 ♖e5 23. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 24. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 25. d6 ♖d8 26. ♖c6 ♖e2= 27. ♖c1 ♖d2 28. ♖xc5, draw, T. Polak – P. Simacek, Grygov 2011.

20. ♖d2 ♖d6 21. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 22. ♖d1 ♖xd5 23. ♖e3 ♖xa2, draw, M. Hammes – L. Butkiewicz, Torres Vedras 2011.

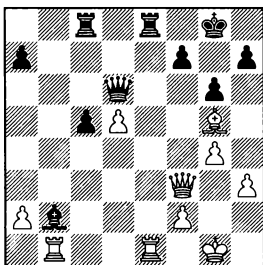
20. ♖c1 ♖d6!? (here it would be interesting for Black to test 20... ♖xe1+ 21. ♖xe1 ♖xb2 22. ♖d1) 21. ♖a4 ♖e5 22. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 23. ♖d7 ♖b8 24. ♖h6



24... ♖xf2+! (24... ♖f6 25. ♖c2 ♖d8 26. ♖c7 ♖xd5 27. ♖e2± G. Meier – Gashimov, Novi Sad 2009; after 26. ♖xa7? g5 it is White who must force a draw by finding the only move: 27. ♖a5 ♖d7 28. ♖b5 ♖d8 29. ♖a5=) 25. ♖xf2 (an interesting but somewhat risky try is 25. ♖h1!? with the idea of 25... ♖xb2 26. d6 ♖b7 27. ♖c7 ♖xc7 28. dxc7 ♖c8 29. ♖d1! ♖d4 30. ♖f4 ♖f8 31. ♖e1↑; 25... ♖h4!? with the idea of ♖e7-d6, or 25... ♖e8!? with

approximate equality.) 25...g5. Black's prospects are not worse here and most probably it will result in a perpetual check after the possible continuation: 26.♖c2 ♖d4+ (26...♖f6+? 27.♔g1 ♖xh6 28.♖e7±) 27. ♔e1 ♖g1+ 28.♔d2 ♖f2+ 29.♔d1 ♖f1=

20.♖b1!? ♖d6 (20...♖xa2?! 21.d6 ♖d5 22.♔e7±) 21.♖f3 (21. ♖a4 ♖xe1+ 22.♖xe1 ♖xd5 23.♔h6 ♖d8=) 21...♔xb2



It looks as though Black has sufficient play to hold the balance:

22.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23.g4 ♔d4 24. ♔f4 ♔e5 25.♖e1 f6 26.♖d3 ♖d8 27.♔xe5 fxe5 28.♖c3 ♖e8 29.♖c4 ♖d8 30.♖d1 ♔g7=

22.♖e4 ♖xe4 (22...♔d4?! 23. ♖b7 f5 24.♖ee7) 23.♖xe4 ♔e5 24.♖c1 f5 25.♖c4 ♔d4 26.♖e1 ♖b8!=

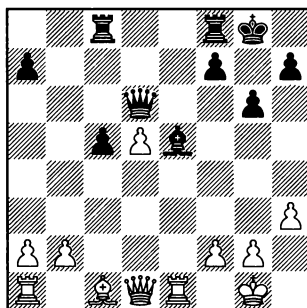
22.♔f4 ♔e5 23.♖xe5 ♖xe5 24. ♖d1 ♖ce8= D.Blagojevic – A.Co-lovic, Porto Carras 2011; 22.g3!? ♖xe1+! Exchanges are in Black's favour. (White will need to neutralise his opponent's slight initiative in the variation 22...♔e5 23. ♖b7 f6 24.♔h6) 23.♖xe1 ♔e5 24.

♖e4 f6 (24...♔xg3 25.♔d2!?±) 25. ♔e3 ♖d8 26.f4 ♔c3 27.♖c1 ♔d4 28.♔xd4 cxd4 29.♖xd4 ♖a3=. Black should not lose this position.

22.g4 ♖xe1+ (22...♔e5 23.♖b7 f6 24.♖xe5 ♖xe5 25.♔xf6 ♖xd5 26.♖g7+ ♔f8 27.♖c3) 23.♖xe1 ♔e5 24.♖e4 f6 25.♔e3 ♖d8=

20...♖xe1+ 21.♖xe1 ♖f6 22. ♔h2 (22.♔g3?! ♖g5!) 22...♖d8 23.d6 ♔xb2 24.♖b1 ♔d4 25. ♔g3 h5 26.♖e7±, with superior prospects for White.

B2c) 18...♖d6!?



19.♖a4!?!N

For 9.♖f3 ♖fd8 20.♔g5 ♖d7 – see B1.

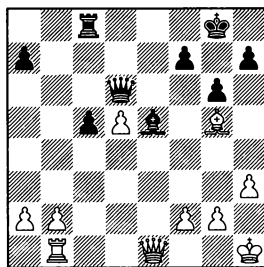
19.♖b1 – This move has been played only once, in the game D.Fridman – E.Alekseev, Ohrid 2009 and the opponents agreed immediately to a draw. Indeed, after Black's best response 19... ♖fd8 20.♖e2 ♖e8 (also playable is

11. ♖xe4 ♖a5 12. ♖fd2 ♖xb5 13. ♖xd6 ♖a6 14. ♖2c4 ♖d7 15. 0-0 ♖e5

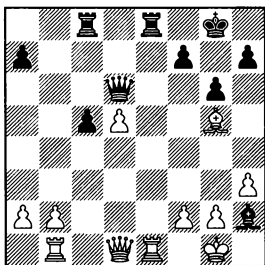
20... ♖d4 21. ♖g5 f6! 22. ♖e3 ♖xd5 23. ♖a6 ♖c6=; 21... ♖d7?! 22. ♖h6!±) 21. ♖c4 ♖ed8 he equalises.

19. ♖h6 ♖fd8 20. ♖e2 ♖d4 21. ♖f3 (21. ♖ad1 ♖xd5= C.Holt – Kacheishvili, Wheeling 2011) 21... ♖xb2 22. ♖ab1 ♖g7 (22... ♖d4=) 23. ♖f4 ♖f6= D.Bлагоjevic – M.Nikolov, Valjevo 2011.

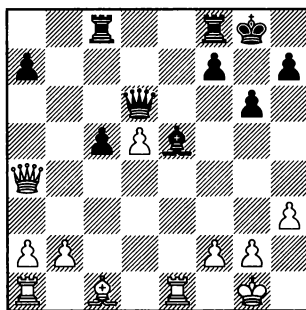
19. ♖g5 ♖fe8!? (here it might be interesting for Black to try 19... f6!? 20. ♖h6 ♖fd8 and he can rely on reaching equality) 20. ♖b1 (20. ♖a4 ♖xd5 21. ♖ad1 ♖c6 22. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 23. ♖f1 ♖ce6 24. b3 ♖d4= D. Blagojevic – Simeonov, Plovdiv 2010; 23. ♖f4 ♖ce6= Chatalbashev – A.Kovacevic, Cetinje 2010; 21. ♖f6 ♖d6 22. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 23. ♖xa7 ♖xe1+ 24. ♖xe1 ♖d2= S.Halkias – Mastrovasilis, Katakolo 2009) 20... ♖h2+



In the diagram position, the only move played so far is 23. ♖e4 f6 24. ♖h6 ♖d8 25. f4 (25. ♖a4!?!; 25. ♖d1 ♖xb2 26. ♖b1 ♖c3 27. ♖b7 ♖xd5 28. ♖g7+ ♖h8 29. ♖e7 ♖d1+ 30. ♖h2 ♖d6+ 31. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 32. ♖xa7 ♖d8 33. a4 ♖d4=; 26... f5 27. ♖a4 ♖f6 28. ♖xa7 ♖xd5 29. f4! 25... ♖d4 26. b3 ♖xd5 27. ♖e2, draw, A.Giri – M.Feygin, Netherlands 2009, but instead after the clever move 23. ♖d1! it would be too early to talk about complete equality for Black. 23... ♖d4 24. ♖f3±



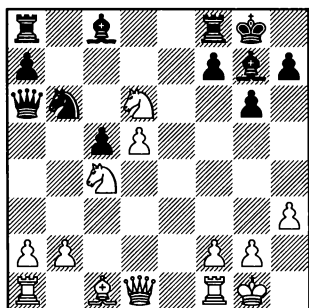
21. ♖h1 (after 21. ♖f1? ♖xe1+ 22. ♖xe1 ♖e8+ Black seizes the initiative, exploiting the bad position of White's king) 21... ♖xe1+ 22. ♖xe1 ♖e5 (22... ♖xd5?? 23. f4+- R.Molina – H.Daurelle, Caleta 2012)



19... ♖xd5 20. ♖h6 ♖fd8 21. ♖e2± White has a slight edge here, owing to Black's pawn weaknesses. White cannot count on having much, but he can still create problems for his opponent...

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1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♗c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0-0 9.♗f3 b5 10.♙xb5 ♗xe4 11.♗xe4
♚a5+ 12.♗fd2 ♚xb5 13.♗xd6 ♚a6
14.♗2c4 ♗d7 15.0-0 ♗b6



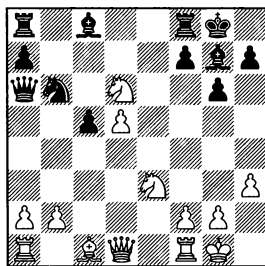
As with 15...♗e5, which we have already analysed, Black's last move, tries to prevent White from consolidating his positional gains. Statistically and in substance, this is Black's main continuation.

16.♗xb6

16.♚b3? ♗xd5

The move 16.♗xc8 is playable, but makes no sense at this point. Now Black will have to capture on b6 in any case, either with the queen or the pawn, but after 16.♗xc8 he might prefer 16...♙xc8!? (16...♚xc8!?; for 16...♙axc8 17.♗xb6 ♚xb6, see 16.♗xb6) 17.♗xb6 axb6.

It is not promising for White to play 16.♗e3, to which Black can respond in various ways.



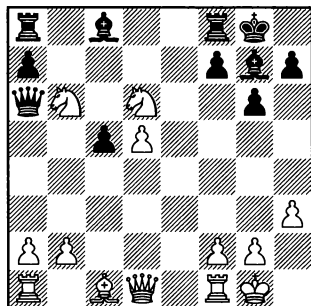
After 16...♗b7 17.♗xb7 (17.♚f5 = V.Kunin – G.Guseinov, Moscow 1996) 17...♚xb7 18.♚b3 Black still has some problems to solve: 18...♙ab8 19.♙d2 ♙fd8 20.♙ad1.

16...♙d7 17.♙e1 ♙ad8 18.♗e4 ♙c6 19.♗xc5 ♚b5 20.♚b3 ♗xd5 leads to approximate equality, for example: 21.♗xd5 ♙xd5 22.♚xb5 ♙xb5 23.♙e3 ♙e8 24.♙ed1 ♙xb2 25.♙xd5 ♙xa1 26.♗b3 ♙c4 27.♙a5 ♙c3 28.♙xa7 ♙xb3 29.axb3 ♙b8 30.♙h6 f5, while instead of 17.♙e1 White achieves little with 17.♗e4 ♗a4! (slightly better than 17...♙ac8 18.♙e1 ♗a4, B.Arkhangel'sky – Fronczek, Bad Liebenzell 1996, in view of 19.d6!±, followed by

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♖fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♖xd6 ♜a6 14. ♖2c4 ♖d7 15. 0-0 ♖b6

♖e3-d5) 18. ♜c2 f5 19. ♖xc5 (19. ♖g5 f4?) 19... ♖xc5 20. ♜xc5 ♜ac8 21. ♜b4 ♜fe8, with undoubtedly excellent compensation for Black's two missing pawns.

16... ♜d8. This is the simplest. 17. ♖e4 ♖d4 18. ♖c2 ♖g7= C. Crouch – D.Tan, Newport 1998.



After 16. ♖xb6, we shall analyse the moves **A) 16... axb6** and **B) 16... ♜xb6**.

A) 16... axb6

This move seems ambitious, but in fact it is very risky for Black...

17. ♖g5!

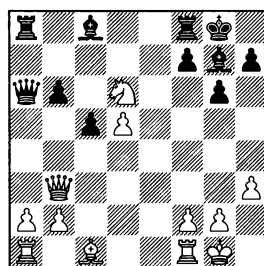
This is White's most energetic reply – his bishop is going to the e7-square.

The alternatives are clearly inferior.

17. ♜c2 ♜d8 (17... ♖d7?! 18. ♖g5± H.Gruenberg – Arbakov, Bayern 1996) 18. ♖f4 ♜a4=

17. ♜e1 b5! is not as good, although even then White can retain a small advantage with 18. ♖e4± (after the ambitious move 18. ♖e8, Black has the riposte 18... ♖g4!= Laurent – Miron, Guingamp 2000).

17. ♜b3



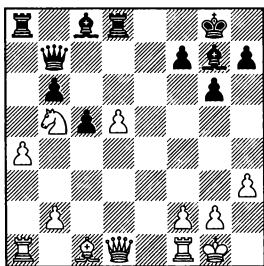
17... ♜d8 18. ♖f4 ♜a4 (18... ♖d7?! 19. ♜fe1±) 19. ♖g3±;

17... ♖d7 18. ♖g5 b5 (18... ♜a4?! 19. ♜xb6 ♜fb8?! 20. ♜xc5± C.Horvath D.Drollinger, Lugano 2000; 18... f5?! 19. a4 ♖xa4? 20. ♜e3; 19... ♖f6? 20. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 21. ♜c3+- A. Ipatov – D.Kononenko, Odessa 2008, with the idea of 21... ♜xd6 22. ♜e5+-; 18... ♖a4?! 19. ♜f3 ♖xb2 20. ♖h6!?!; 20. ♖e7 ♖xa1 21. ♜xa1 ♖c2 22. ♜e1?! ♜d3 23. ♜f6±; it might be interesting for White to play 22. ♖f6!?, after which he has the edge after 22... h6 23. ♖b2 f6 24. ♜g4→, or 22... ♜d3 23. ♜f4 g5 24. ♜xg5+ ♜g6 25. ♜e5± M.Voisika I.Madl, Brno 1989) 19. ♖e4! (19. ♖e7?! c4 20. ♜e3 ♜fb8 21. a4 bxa4 22. ♜f4 f5 23. ♖xc4±; 20. ♜b4 f5!∞; 19... f5, and now not 20. ♜fe1?! ♜fb8 21. ♜e2 ♜b6 22. ♜g3 ♖f8= O.Averkin – O.Maiorov, Sochi

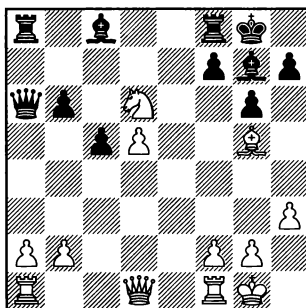
1996 23.♘f7!=, but 20.♖c2!±)
19...c4 20.♖b4 f5 21.♘c3± A.Mar-
ic – Litinskaya, Kuala Lumpur
1990.

17...♖e2! This is Black's best
move. 18.♘xc8 ♜xc8 19.d6 ♕e5
(19...b5?! 20.♕g5± J.Horvath –
E.Szalanczy, 1989; 19...♞d8 20.
♖xb6 ♕e5 21.♖xc5 ♜ac8 22.
♖a5!± with the idea of 22...
♕h2+? 23. ♔xh2 ♖xf1 24.♕g5+–)
20.♕g5 ♕xd6 21.♞fe1 ♖a6 22.♞ad1
b5=

17.a4 is an interesting try, but
I do not recommend it, since
there is has a stronger and much
more accurate move. A possible
continuation is 17...♞d8 (17...♕d7
18.♞e1 ♕xa4 19.♖f3 b5 20.♘e4 c4
21.♞e2↑; 17...♞a7?! 18.♞e1 ♞d7 19.
♘e8± P.Cramling – M.Suba, Cor-
doba 1995) 18.♘b5 ♖b7



19.♞e1 (19.d6 ♖c6 20.♞e1 ♕b7
21.f3±) 19...♞xd5 (19...♕f5 20.d6±
P.Cramling – G.Miralles, Mar-
seille 2001) 20.♞e8+ ♕f8 21.♖f3
♖c6! 22.♘c7 ♖xc7 23.♞xf8+ (23.
♖xd5 ♕b7 24. ♖e5 ♖c6=) 23...
♔xf8 24.♕h6+ ♔g8 25.♞e1! ♞e5
26.♞xe5 ♖xe5 27.♖xa8±



17...♕d7

17...♕xb2 18.♕e7 ♕xa1 (18...
♕d7 – see 17...♕d7 18.♕e7 ♕b2)
19.♖xa1 ♖xa2 20.♖c3! (stronger
than 20.♖f6 ♕d7 21.♕xf8 ♞xf8
22.♖e7±) 20...♕b7 (20...♕d7 21.
♕xf8 ♞xf8 22.♘e4+–; 20...♖a5
21.♖e3+– ♕d7 22.♕f6) 21.♕xf8
♞xf8 22.♘e4 f5 23.♘f6+ ♞xf6
24.♖xf6 ♖xd5 25.f3+–

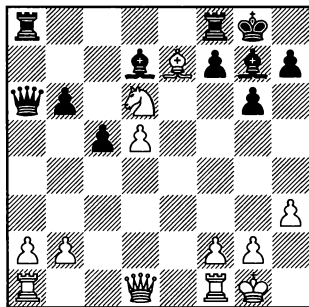
17...f6 18.♕f4 ♖a4 (18...♕d7
19.♞e1 ♞fd8 20.♖d2± Georgescu
– C.Malureanu, Eforie Nord
2009) 19.♖d2 f5 20.♞fe1±

17...♞a7 18.♞e1 – White renews
the threat of ♕e7– 18...♕xb2 (18...
b5 19.♘e4 ♕xb2 20.♘xc5 ♖a3 21.
♕c1!±) 19.♞b1N This strong nov-
elty puts the whole line out of
business (but not 19.♕e7 ♞xe7
20.♞xe7 ♕xa1 21.♖xa1+– G.Ka-
cheishvili – Ferrariz, Parsipanny
2009; 20...b5 21.♘e4±) 19...♕c3
(19...♖xa2 20.♞e2+–; 19...♕g7 20.
♕e7) 20.♕h6! ♕g7 (20...♞d8 21.
♖f3+–) 21.♕xg7 ♔xg7 22.♘e8+
♔g8 23.♘f6+ ♔g7 24.♖d2+–

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♜fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♜xd6 ♜a6 14. ♜2c4 ♜d7 15. 0-0 ♜b6

18. ♙e7!?

It is also interesting for White to play a simple move which has not been tested in practice yet: 18. ♜d2!? ♜a5 19. ♜e2 ♜a6 20. ♜fe1±, nevertheless, 18. ♙e7 is more accurate.



18... ♙xb2

18...f5 19. ♜c2 ♜fb8, R. Palliser – E. Berg, Liverpool, 2007, 20. ♜fe1±

18...♜fb8. Now White has a choice between several attractive possibilities, for example: 19. ♜e4 (or 19. ♜f3!? f5 20. g4!±) 19... ♙xb2 20. ♜d2 ♙g7 21. ♜f6+ ♜h8 22. ♜fe1± ♜b7 23. ♜e4!→, with the idea of ♜h4+–, or 22... ♜b7 23. ♜e4→

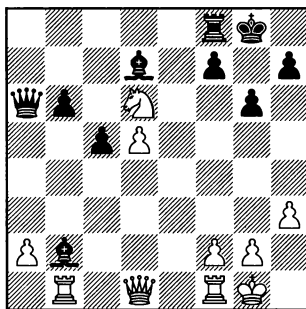
19. ♙xf8

White achieves little with 19. ♜d2 ♙xa1! (19... ♙d4 20. ♙xf8 20... ♜xf8 21. ♜ae1 b5 22. ♜f4±; 20... ♙xa1 21. ♜xa1 ♜xf8 22. ♜e1 b5 23. ♜f4 ♜xa2 24. ♜e7 ♙f5 25. g4 ♜a1+ 26. ♜h2 ♜f6 27. ♜b7±) 20. ♜xa1 ♜a5! and Black has good chances for equality.

The move 19. ♜b1 transposes, after 19... ♙e5, to the variation with 19. ♙xf8, but it offers Black an extra possibility – 19... ♙g7 20. ♙xf8 ♙xf8 – so it is not worth investigating this further. The move 19. ♙xf8 is simply better for White.

19... ♜xf8 20. ♜b1

I believe that the surprising move 20. ♜e1!? might also have a promising future.



20... ♙e5!

It is essential for Black to oust the enemy knight.

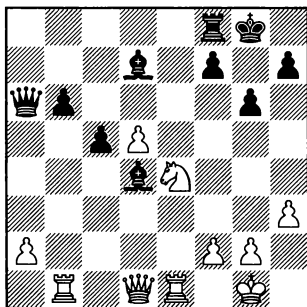
The line 20... ♙d4 21. ♜b3 ♜b8 22. ♜be1!? seems a bit unnatural, but the occupation of the e-file with this particular rook creates problems for Black (22. ♜fe1!? b5 23. ♜g3 ♜b6 24. ♜e4 ♙f5, S. Deak – G. Suto, Sarospatak 1999, 25. ♜xc5!! ♙xc5 26. ♜e8+ ♙f8 27. ♜e3 ♜g7 28. ♜e1 ♙d7 29. ♜d8+–) 22... b5 23. ♜xf7! This is the point! If the other white rook had been on the e1-square, then after 23... ♜f6, the weakness of the f2-square

Chapter 11

would have hindered White's attack. 23...♖xf7 24.d6+ ♜f6 25. ♜e7+-

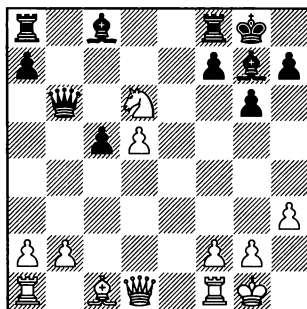
21. ♖e4 ♗d4 22. ♜e1

It might also be interesting for White to try 22.♞d2!?



White's advantage is clear and Black will have to fight long and hard for a draw. 22...b5 23.♞d2 ♗f5 24.g4!±

B) 16...♞xb6



17. ♖xc8

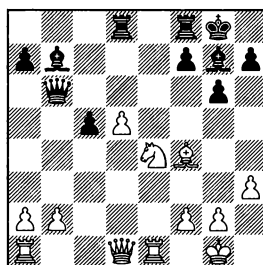
This is the right decision!

White's alternatives do not achieve anything substantial.

17. ♖c4?! ♞a6 (17...♞b4?! 18. b3! ♗xa1 19. ♗d2 ♗c3 20.a3) 18. ♖e3 ♞b8↑

17. ♖e4 ♜e8 18.♞f3 (18.♜e1 ♗d7!?∞) 18...♗b7 19.♞d1 ♜ad8 20. ♖c3 ♞d7= L.Gomez Jurado – F.Fernandez Lopez, Seville 1998.

17. ♗f4 ♗a6 18.♜e1 ♜ad8 (it is worse for Black to play 18...♞fd8 19. ♖e4 ♗b7 20.d6± A.Abeln – R.Ris, Haarlem 2005, or 18...♞xb2 19.♞c1 ♗d4 20.♗e3 ♜ad8 21. ♖e4±; 19...♜ad8, D.Brulic – V.Malada, Split 2001; 20. ♖e4 ♞d4 21.♞xd4 cxd4 22. ♖c5 ♗c8 23.d6±) 19. ♖e4 ♗b7



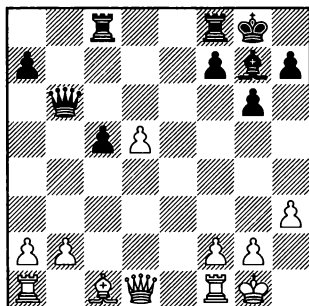
20.d6 ♜fe8 21.♞a4 ♗c6 22.♞c4 ♗d4 23. ♖g5 ♞b7 24.♞b3 ♜xe1+ 25.♜xe1 ♞xb3 (25...♗g2 26.♞xb7 ♗xb7 27. ♖xf7 ♖xf7 28.♜e7±) 26. axb3 h6 27. ♖f3 (after 27. ♖e4?! ♜e8 White must already think about fighting for a draw) 27... ♗xf3 28.gxf3 ♗xb2=

17...♜axc8

17...♜fxc8. Capturing the knight with this rook is of course possible, but is clearly weaker

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♖fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♖xd6 ♜a6 14. ♖2c4 ♖d7 15. 0-0 ♖b6

than 17... ♜axc8, because the rook on a8 is obviously better placed on c8 than on a8, while the f8-rook can occupy some other file, for instance it might be needed on d8. 18. ♜e1!?±

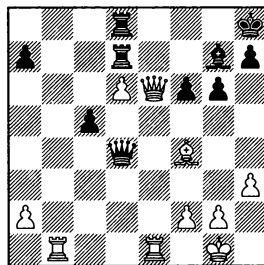


We shall now analyse these possibilities: **B1) 18. ♜e1**, **B2) 18. d6!?** and **B3) 18. ♜b1**.

B1) 18. ♜e1 ♖d4!?

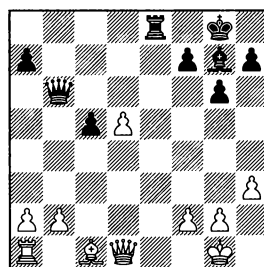
18... ♜d6?! 19. ♖g5±

18... ♜fd8?! 19. ♖g5 f6 (19... ♖f6 20. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 21. ♜e2±; 19... ♖d7 20. ♜a4! ♜d6 21. ♜ad1 ♖d4 22. b4!±; 20... ♜b7 21. d6! ♜xd6 22. ♜e8+ ♖f8, Granados Gomez – F. Braga, Benasque 1999, 23. ♜ae1 ♖d4 24. ♜xc8! ♜xa4? 25. ♜xf8+ ♖g7 26. ♜ee8 f5 27. ♖g8+ ♖f7 28. ♖h6+–; 24... ♜xc8 25. ♜xa7±) 20. ♖f4 ♜xb2 (20... ♜b7 21. d6 ♖f8 22. ♜c1± V. Golod – M. Lammers, Bad Zwischenahn 2006) 21. d6± (21. ♜b1!? ♜xa2 22. ♜b7 ♖f8 23. d6±) 21... ♖d7? 22. ♜d5+ ♖h8 23. ♜ab1 ♜d4 24. ♜e6 ♜cd8



25. ♜xd7!? ♜xd7 26. ♜b8+ ♖f8 27. ♖h6 ♜f7 28. ♖d8! ♖g8 29. ♜ee8 1-0 Campos Moreno – Martin Gonzalez, Barcelona 1994.

18... ♜fe8!? 19. ♜xe8+ ♜xe8



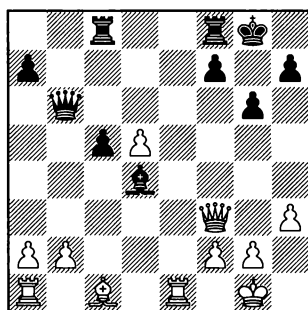
20. ♖e3 (20. ♖g5 ♖d4 21. ♜d2 ♜d6 22. ♜e1 ♜xe1+ 23. ♜xe1 ♜xd5= Grabarczyk – Drollinger, Baden 2006; also interesting is 20. ♜b1!? ♖d4 21. ♖f4 ♜f6 22. ♜f3 ♜f5 23. ♖d1 ♖xb2 24. g4 ♜d7 25. d6!?!± and although White's position is more active, thanks to his far-advanced passed d6-pawn, it is difficult to say if he will succeed in turning this into or a full point; 23... ♜e4?! 24. ♖d6 is worse for Black after 24... ♜xf3 25. gxf3 ♜e2 26. b4± or 24... ♜xd5 25. ♖xc5 ♜e5 26. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 27. ♖xd4 ♜xd4 28. g3± Akopian – Kristjansson, Dresden 2008.) 20... ♖d4 (20... ♜xb2 21.

♖b1 ♜xa2 22.d6±; 20...♞d8 21. ♙g5! ♙f6 22.♞d2±) 21.♞a4 (21. ♞d2 ♞d8= Hauchard – Degraeve, Belfort 1998) 21...♞d8 22.♙xd4 cxd4 23.♞c4 ♜a5 (23...♞xb2 24. ♞d1 ♞c3 25.♞xd4 ♞xd4 26.♞xd4±) 24.♞xd4 ♞xd5. White is slightly better, but Black's active pieces should enable him to draw.

19. ♞f3

19.♙h6 ♞xb2 20.♞f3 ♞fe8=; it would be inferior for Black to choose 20...♙g7 21.♙g5±

19.♖b1 ♞fd8 20.♞f3 ♞f6!=



19...♞fe8!

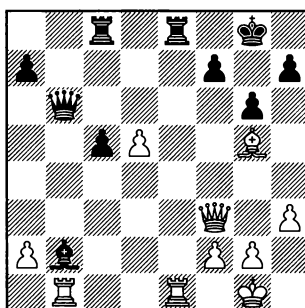
19...♞fd8?! 20.♙g5 ♞d7 (20...f6 21.♙h6 ♞b7 22.♞e6 ♞xd5?? 23. ♞e8+-; 22...♞d7 23.♞e4± Krasenkow – Wojtaszek, Lubniewice 2003) 21.♞e7 (a bit stronger than 21.♞e2 ♞d6 22.♞ae1 f6 23.♙h6±; 22...h5! 23.♞e7 ♞xd5 24.♞xd7 ♞xd7 25.♞e7 ♞f5 26.♞f5 gxf5 and Black is close to equality) 21... ♞xe7 22.♙xe7 ♞xb2 23.♞e1↑ C. Horvath – Dobosz, Various 2006.

19...c4?! 20.♙h6 ♞fd8 (20... ♙xb2 21.♙xf8± ♙xa1 22.♙e7!±; 21...♙xf8 22.♞e6! ♙xa1. This is the only move for Black, since the alternatives all lose quickly. 23. ♞xb6 axb6 24.d6 ♞d8 25.♞c6 ♙f6 26.♞xb6+- Krasenkow – Velicka, Batumi 2002; 25...♙e5 26.♞xb6 ♞xd6 27.♞c5 f6 28.♙f1 c3 29.f4! ♙xf4 30.♞xc3+-) 21.♞e2 ♙xb2 22.♖b1 c3 23.♞e7 ♞f8 (23...f5 24.d6!+-) 24.♙xf8 ♞xf8 25. ♞d3±

20. ♙g5 ♙xb2

20...♞d6?! 21.♙f4± Golod – Y.Gruenfeld, Ramat Aviv 2004.

21. ♖ab1



21...♞d6!

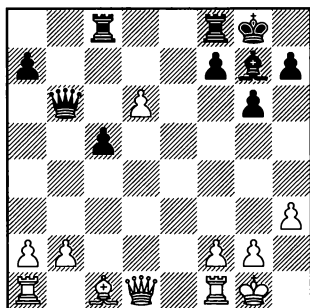
21...c4!?

22.♞xe8+ ♞xe8 23.♙f4 ♙e5 24.♞e1 f6 and Black has equalised.

B2) 18.d6!?

This is a very interesting move, It is in fact better than all his other possibilities except the main line – 18.♖b1.

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♜fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♜xd6 ♜a6 14. ♜2c4 ♜d7 15. 0-0 ♜b6



18... ♜cd8!?N

It is difficult to find clear equality for Black even in the more popular variations here.

18... ♜e5? In the game Zivanic – Boskovic, Dallas 2006, White agreed to a draw a bit too early, since after 19. d7 ♜cd8 20. ♜h6 ♜g7 21. ♜xg7 ♜xg7 22. ♜a4± he would have a considerable advantage.

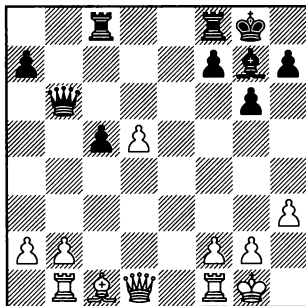
18... ♜fd8 19. ♜f4 ♜c6 (19... ♜d7 20. ♜a4± Chatalbashev – Szamoskozi, Albena 2009) 20. ♜d2 ♜b8 21. ♜a5!? (21. ♜ab1?! ♜f8 22. ♜fd1 ♜b6? 23. ♜c3± B.Esen – Ersahin, Izmir 2006; 22... ♜xd6 23. ♜xd6 ♜b6=) 21... ♜b6 22. ♜xb6 axb6 23. ♜ab1±.

18... ♜d4 19. ♜f4 ♜xb2 20. ♜f3 ♜c2 21. ♜ab1 (21. ♜ae1!?) 21... ♜f5 22. ♜b7± Ulibin – Chatalbashev, Bled 2002.

19. ♜f4 ♜xb2 20. ♜c1 ♜d4 21. ♜c2 ♜b5 22. ♜e1 White's strong passed d6-pawn provides him with a slight but stable advantage.

B3) 18. ♜b1

This is White's most popular move.



We shall analyse the following possibilities for Black: **B3a) 18... ♜d6!?** and **B3b) 18... ♜fd8**.

The alternatives are less dangerous for White:

18... ♜b7?! 19. d6 (19. ♜g5!?) 19... ♜fd8 20. ♜g5! ♜d7 21. ♜f4 ♜f8 22. ♜a4± ♜xd6 (22... ♜c6 23. ♜xc6 ♜xc6 24. ♜fd1 ♜xd6 25. ♜d5±) 23. ♜bd1! (it is not advisable to try 23. ♜fd1 ♜c7 24. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 25. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 26. ♜xa7 ♜d5=) 23... ♜c7 (23... ♜cd8 24. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 25. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 26. ♜e8+ ♜g7 27. ♜e5+ ♜f6 28. ♜c1±) 24. ♜fe1 ♜cd8 25. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 26. ♜e8+ ♜g7 27. ♜e5+ f6 28. ♜xd8 ♜xd8 29. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 30. ♜xa7+ ♜h6 31. ♜a3±

18... ♜cd8 19. ♜g5 (stronger than 19. ♜f4 ♜fe8 20. ♜d3 ♜e5 21. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 22. ♜fd1 ♜d6 23. ♜a3 ♜xd5 24. ♜xd5 ♜xd5= A.Breier – Mattick, Germany 1999; 21. ♜g5 f6 22. ♜e3 ♜d6 23. ♜fd1 ♜d4 24. ♜c4 ♜xd5 25. ♜xd5+ ♜xd5 26. b4

Chapter 11

♖ed8=) 19...♗d7 20.♖f3±

In practice Black has also tried 18...c4, but this move cannot be recommended, since his priority should be to attack the enemy d5-pawn. 19.♗g5!? ♗d6 20.♗e1±

18...♗d4?! He should be in no hurry to play this move, since the moment White's pawn comes to the d6-square Black might need his bishop on f8. 19.♗f4 ♗f6 20.♗d2 ♗f5 21.d6±. White's extra pawn is securely protected and he stands clearly better, P.Kiss – G.Suto, Fuzesabony 2004.

18...♗fe8 19.♗f4 (19.♗f3!?) 19...♗e5 20.d6 ♗cd8 21.d7 ♗e6 22.♗xe5 ♗xe5 23.♗e1 ♗xe1+?! (Black is faced with a difficult fight for a draw in the endgame resulting from 23...♗e6 24.♗xe5 ♗xe5 25.♗d2!? ♗d4 26.♗xd4 cxd4 27.♖f1 with the idea ♖e2-d3±) 24.♗xe1± A.Bets – B.Nevednichy, Kishinev 2005.

18...♗a6 Black has attacked the a2-pawn, but White does not need to protect it. 19.♗g5!± (19.a3? ♗fd8 20.♗f3 ♗f6= T.Lunn – I.Snape, Hastings 2006).

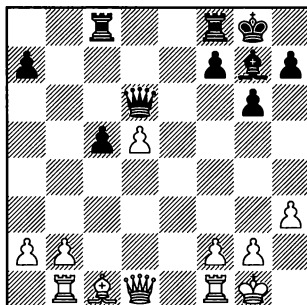
B3a) 18...♗d6!?

Along with 18...♗fd8 this is a good move for Black.

(diagram)

19.♗g5!

I have already mentioned that



White has serious difficulties in maintaining an advantage, so every nuance is of great importance. With his last move he provokes the advance of the enemy h-pawn, so that Black will find it difficult in future to accomplish the important bishop sortie to the d4-square.

I have failed to find anything better for White here, as you will see by playing over the following variations:

19.♗e3 ♗fd8 20.♗a4 ♗xd5 21.♗fd1 ♗d4= Z.Kozul – Vranesic, Toronto 1990.

19.♗e1 ♗cd8!? I believe this to be Black's simplest road to equality. 20.♗g5 ♗d7=

Black need not fear 19.♗f3 ♗fd8 20.♗e1 (20.♗d1 ♗d4=) 20...♗d7 (20...♗f6 21.♗a3 ♗f5= R.Heller – Kulovana, Litomysl 2005) 21.♗f4 ♗xd5 22.♗xd5 ♗xd5= Golod – Vasquez, Internet 2002.

19...h6

19...♗b8 20.b3 ♗b4 21.♗f3±

20.♗e3

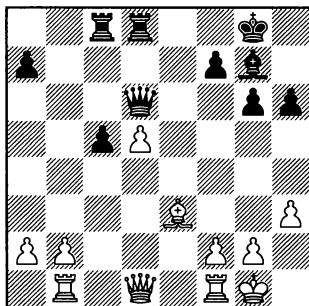
20.♗h4 f5 21.f3 ♗d4+ 22.♗f2

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♖fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♖xd6 ♜a6 14. ♖2c4 ♖d7 15. 0-0 ♖b6

♜xd5= Volzhin – Chadaev, Sochi 2004.

20... ♜fd8

20... ♜f5!? 21. ♜f3!? f4 22. ♗d2 ♜cd8 23. ♗a5 ♜d7 24. ♜fd1 ♜f5 (24... ♗d4 25. b4!±) 25. ♗c3±



21. b3!N

21. ♜a4 ♜xd5 22. ♜xa7 (22. ♜bd1 ♗d4=) 22... ♗d4!N (it was previously considered that after 22... c4 23. ♜a4 White preserves some chances of gaining an edge. 23... ♜a8 24. ♜c2 ♜xa2 25. ♜fd1 ♜a8 26. ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 27. ♜xc4 ♜xb2 28. ♜xb2 ♗xb2 29. ♗xh6± I. Ibragimov – M. Nepomniashchy, St. Petersburg 1995.) 23. a3 (23. ♗xh6?! g5! 24. ♜e7 ♖h7 25. ♜xg5 ♜e6=) 23... ♗xe3 24. fxe3 ♜e6=

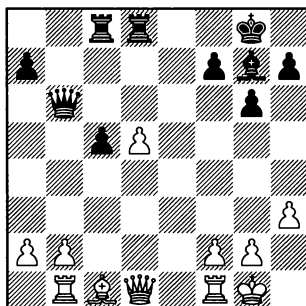
21... ♜xd5 22. ♜c1

Objectively speaking, Black should manage to hold this position, but nevertheless he does not have complete equality and must fight for the draw. It is important that he does not have now the move ♗d4.

22... ♜e6 23. ♜c2±

B3b) 18... ♜fd8

This is Black's most natural move. His plan is simple – to regain the missing pawn.



19. ♗f4

19. ♗e3 ♜b7 20. b3 ♗d4= Kharlov – Chatalbashev, Cap d'Agde 2002.

White's advantage is only symbolic after 19. ♗g5 ♜d7 20. ♜e1 (20. ♜g4 ♜b7 21. ♜fd1 h5 22. ♜c4 ♗d4=; 22. ♜f3 ♗d4, draw, I. Ibragimov – N. De Firmian, Reykjavik 1994) 20... ♜b7 21. d6 ♗f8 22. ♜c2 ♜xd6 23. b3 ♜d5 24. ♗e3 ♜cd8±

19... ♜b7!

19... ♜a6?! 20. d6± with the idea of 20... ♗f8? 21. d7+–

Another interesting move is 19... ♜d7 and several games have been played with this. However, these are of little interest to us, since Black has a stronger move at his disposal. I will only mention that after a so far untried move –

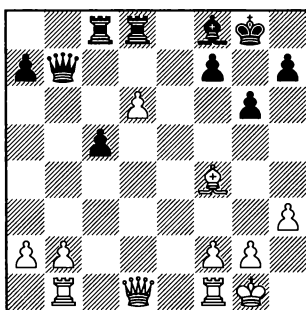
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20.♖g4!? – Black cannot solve his problems easily (20.♖f3!?!; 20.♖d2!?!), for example: 20...♞cd8 21.d6 h5 (21...♙f8? 22.♙g5+–) 22.♖g5 ♙f8 23.♙e5 ♙xd6 24.♙c3 ♙e7 25.♖e5±

19...c4 20.d6 ♞d7 21.♖a4 ♞c6 (it might have been the least of the evils for Black to play 21...♖c6 22.♖xc6 ♞xc6 23.♞fd1±) 22.♞be1± Rogozenko – Moldovan, Romania 1995.

19...♖f6 20.♖d2 ♖f5 21.d6 ♙e5 22.♙xe5 ♖xe5 23.d7± S.Tania – Le Thanh Tu, Teheran 2007.

20.d6 ♙f8



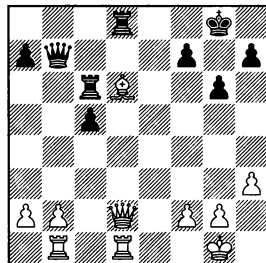
21.♖d3!

This move creates the most problems for Black.

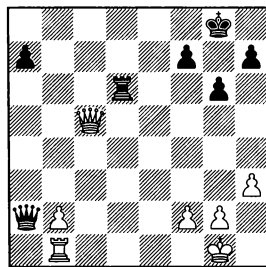
He has no need to fear 21.♖d2 ♙xd6 22.♙xd6 ♞c6 23.♞fd1.

(diagram)

23...♖a6! It is amazing that this move went unnoticed for a long time by players with Black and instead they used to enter a



clearly inferior endgame (23...♙xd6?! 24.♖xd6 ♞xd6 25.♞xd6±. There have been many games played with this line, including two of Karpov's games, against Judit Polgar and Van Wely, but we do not need to analyse this move, since Black can avoid this rather unpleasant endgame and equalise easily.) 24.♖g5 (24.♖c3 ♞cxd6 25.♞xd6 ♖xd6= V.Akobian – Ishkhamov, Reno 2003) 24...♙xd6 (24...♞cxd6?! 25.♖xd8+ ♞xd8 26.♞xd8+ ♙g7 27.♞a1±) 25.♞xd6 (25.a3 ♖b6 26.♖e7 c4= Malakhatko – Vuilleumier, Geneva 2007) 25...♞xd6 26.♖xc5 ♖xa2



27.♞e1 (27.♖c8+ ♙g7 28.♖c3+ ♙g8 29.♖c8+ ♙g7 30.♖c3+ ♙g8 31.♖c8+, draw, A.Greenfeld – Nabaty, Chennai 2011) 27...♞e6. This is the simplest (of course he

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♖fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♖xd6 ♜a6 14. ♖2c4 ♖d7 15. 0-0 ♖b6

can also play 27...♙d8 28. ♜c7 ♙f8 29. ♜b7 ♙d8 30. ♜c7 ♙f8 31. ♜b7, draw, Z.Csiszar – Flumbort, Hungary 2006; 28.b4 a6= A.Karpov – Topalov, Las Palmas 1996) 28. ♙d1 (28.♙xe6 ♜xe6 29. ♜xa7 ♙e1+ 30. ♖h2 ♙e5=) 28...♙e8=

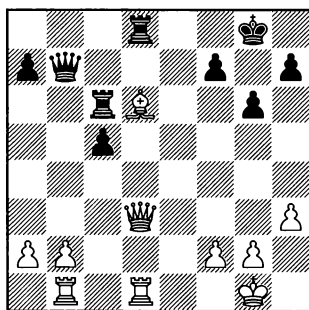
21...♙xd6!

21...♜b4? 22.d7±

21...c4 22.♜g3± (22.♜d4?! ♙xd6 23.♙xd6 ♙c6=).

21...♙c6 22.♙fd1 (with the idea of d7) 22...♙xd6 – see 21...♙d6.

22.♙xd6 ♙c6 23.♙fd1



23...♜d7

23...♜b6? 24.♙xc5±

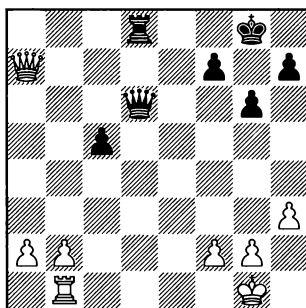
24.♜a3

24.♙bc1 ♙xd6 25.♜xd6 ♜xd6 26.♙xd6 ♙xd6 27.♙xc5 ♙d1+ 28. ♖h2 ♙d2=

24...♙xd6 25.♙xd6 ♜xd6 26.♜xa7

White has retained an extra

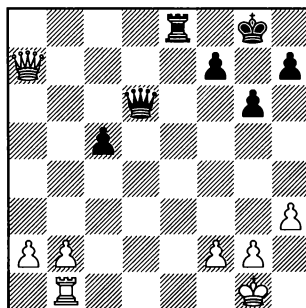
pawn and although Black is close to equality, thanks to the activity of his remaining pieces, it would be a bit premature to consider this position as absolutely equal.



26...♙e8!?

26...♜e5 27.♜a5± Campos Moreno – Outerelo Ucha, Burgas 1999.

26...♜d5 27.♜e7!? (stronger than 27.♙c1 ♜g5, with more possibilities of organising counterplay, Zatonskih – A.Muzychuk, Turin 2006) 27...♙b8 28.a4! ♜a2 29.♙c1 ♜xa4 30.♜xc5±



27.♜a5!?

We shall see that here White has a choice between numerous possibilities, of approximately equally strength, and all of them create some difficulties for Black:

27.♖a4!? ♜e2 28.♖c4 ♖e5 29.♖c3! (29.a3 ♜xf2=) 29...♜xc3 30.bxc3 ♜xa2 (30...♜c2 31.♜a1!±) 31.♜b5. Although White is a bit better the most likely outcome of the game is a draw. 31...c4 32.♜b4 h5 33.♜xc4 ♔g7 34.g3. Black must fight for it, though...

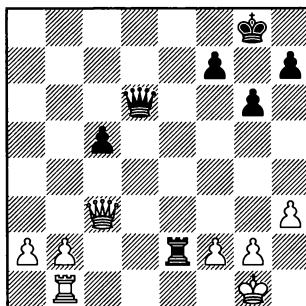
27.a4!? ♜e2 28.♖a8+ ♔g7 29.♖f3 ♖d2 (better than 29...♖e5 30.b3± V.Neverov – Simantsev, Kharkov 1999) 30.g3±

27...♜e2

27...♖d4 28.♖c3 ♖xc3 29.bxc3 ♜a8 30.♜b5 ♜xa2. This is a familiar endgame. White managed to win it in the following game, but not without the help of his opponent. I will quote it in its entirety. 31.g4 c4 32.♜b4 g5 33.♜xc4 ♔f8 34.♔g2 ♔e7 35.♔g3 ♜d2 36.♜d4 ♜c2 37.♜d3 ♔e6 38.f4 h6 39.♜e3+ ♔d5 40.♔f3 ♜d2 (40...f6!?) 41.♜e5+ ♔d6 42.♜e2 ♜d1 43.♔e4 ♜f1 44.♜d2+ ♔c6?! (it was correct for Black to keep his king on the king-side with 44...♔e7) 45.fxg5 hxg5 46.♜d3 ♜f4+ 47.♔e5 ♔c7 48.c4 ♜f1 49.♜a3 ♔b7?! (49...♜f4!?) 50.c5!? (50.♔d6!? with the idea of 50...f5 51.♜a5 fxg4 52.hxg4+–; 51.♜b3+ ♔c8 52.♜b5 fxg4 53.hxg4 ♜f4 54.♜xg5+–) 50...♜f2 (50...♔c6 51.♜a6+ ♔xc5 52.♜f6 ♜e1+

53.♔f5+–) 51.♔d6 ♜d2+ 52.♔e7 ♜f2 53.♜d3 ♔c6 54.♜d6+ ♔xc5 55.♜f6 1-0 Malakhatko – Kozhuharov, Nikaia 2007.

28.♖c3



28...♖b6

28...♖d5 29.a4 ♜xf2 30.♔xf2 ♖f5+ 31.♔g3 ♖xb1 32.a5± Ionov – Berelowitsch, St Petersburg 1999.

29.a4 c4 30.♜f1 ♖b3 31.♜c1!?

31.♖xb3 cxb3 32.♜b1 ♜e4 33.a5 (33.♜a1 ♜e2 34.♜b1, draw, D. Komarov – Leko, Ulcinj 1997) 33...♜a4 34.♜d1 ♜a2 (34...♜xa5 35.♜d8+ ♔g7 36.♜b8±) 35.a6 ♔g7 36.♜d8 ♜xa6 37.♜b8± Simacek – Kanovsky, Czech Republic 2009.

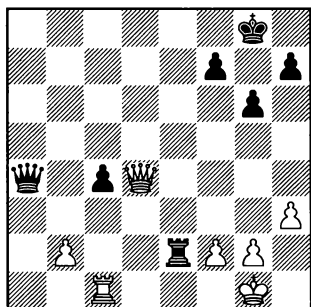
31...♖xa4?

31...♖b6 32.♖f3 ♖xb2 33.♜xc4±

31...♜xb2!? 32.♖xc4 ♖xc4 33.♜xc4 ♜a2± Flumbort – Loetscher, Zug 2003.

11. ♖xe4 ♜a5 12. ♜fd2 ♜xb5 13. ♜xd6 ♜a6 14. ♜2c4 ♜d7 15. 0-0 ♜b6

32. ♜d4!±

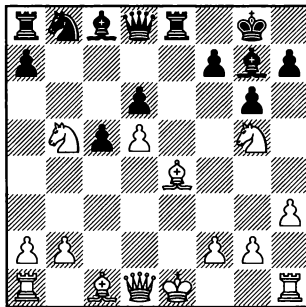
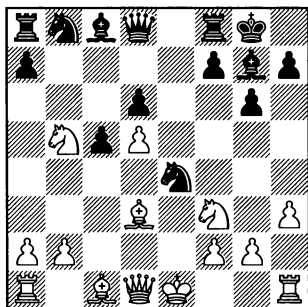


If Black plays in the most principled fashion with 32... ♜c2?

then he will be bitterly disappointed (32... ♜a6 33. ♜xc4 ♜xb2? 34. ♜d8+ ♜g7 35. ♜c8+- Piket – Topalov, Monte Carlo 2000; it is better to defend with 33... ♜e6±) 33. ♜e1! Black is already lost. 33... ♜b5 (33... ♜a8 34. ♜d7 ♜g7 35. ♜d1! ♜a5 36. ♜d4+ ♜h6 37. ♜e4+-; 33... ♜c6 34. ♜d8+ ♜g7 35. ♜e8 ♜c5 36. ♜g8+ ♜h6 37. ♜h4+ ♜h5 38. ♜f4+ ♜g5 39. ♜xf7+-) 34. ♜d8+ ♜g7 35. ♜e8→ with the idea 35... ♜xb2 36. ♜g8+ ♜h6 37. ♜f8+ ♜g5 38. ♜e7+ ♜h6 39. g4 ♜b1+ 40. ♜h2+-

Chapter 12

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0–0 9.♘f3 b5 10.♘xb5 ♘xe4



This is Black's sharpest move, but contemporary theory does not approve of it. We shall analyse it thoroughly and try to prove to you that it is better for Black than was previously thought. Nevertheless, he still has serious problems to solve in some other lines which have not been so well explored yet.

11.♙xe4 ♗e8 12.♘g5!
(diagram)

This move was played for the first time in 1990 by Grandmaster Lev Alburt and it casts great doubt on Black's 10th move.

Now we shall deal in detail with **A) 12...f5?**, **B) 12...h6!?** and Black's main reply **C) 12...♖a5+**.

Black loses quickly after 12... ♙xb2? 13.♙xb2 ♖xg5 14.♗f3!?+- planning 0–0, ♖c3.

It is futile for Black to prevent White from castling with the move 12...♙a6?! 13.a4 ♙xb2 (13... ♙f6 14.♘e6+-; 13...h6 14.♘e6+-) 14.♖a2!+- and although Black regains his piece his kingside is fatally weakened. Instead of 14.♙a2!?, it is less effective to play 14.♙xb2?! ♖xg5 15.0–0†; 14.♘e6?! ♗h4 15.♖c2†, with the idea of ♘g5.

12...♙f5? 13.♗f3 h6 (it is disastrous for Black to play 13...♙xe4 14.♗xf7+ ♘h8 15.♘xd6+-; White has captured a second pawn for

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♜xb5 ♜xe4 11. ♙xe4 ♖e8 12. ♜g5

nothing and he is ready to gobble up Black's bishop on e4, Jaworski – Sikora Lerch, Czech Republic 1995) 14. 0–0 hxg5 15. ♙xf5+– and Black cannot save his kingside pawns, for example: 15...gxf5 16. ♗xf5 ♖e5 17. ♙xg5 f6 18. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 19. ♗g6+ ♙g7 20. f4 ♖e2 21. ♖ae1 ♖xe1 22. ♖xe1 ♜d7 (22...♜a6 23. ♖e6!+– with ideas of f5–f6 or ♜d6–f5) 23. ♗e6+ ♙h7 24. ♜xd6 ♜f6 25. g4+– and the point is not whether White has compensation for the bishop, but how long Black will manage to hang on before resigning...

Attempts to restore the material balance with the help of the move 12...♙f6? are futile, because after 13. 0–0, no matter what Black plays, he will be faced with further material losses, for example: 13...a6 (13...♙a6 14. ♗a4+–, with ideas of ♜c7 or ♙d3, A.Smirnov – A.Malofeev, St Petersburg 2007; 13...♙xg5 14. ♙xg5 ♗xg5 15. ♜xd6+– planning ♗c1xc5, and White is about to gobble a second pawn) 14. ♜e6! fxe6 15. dxe6 axb5 16. ♙xa8+– (intending ♙d5) and Black has no compensation for the sacrificed exchange, I.Krush – Malisov, Ashdod 2006.

It is in White's favour for Black to continue with 12...♗b6?! since here White plays the useful move 13. a4! (White should not retreat his knight with 13. ♜c3, since from the b5-square it exerts pressure against the enemy d6-pawn and

also blocks the a6–f1 diagonal against a possible ♙a6, preventing White from castling) 13...f5 (after 13...h6, White replies with the standard move 14. ♜e6+–) 14. 0–0 fxe4 15. ♙f4 ♙f8 16. ♖e1 with the idea of answering 16...a6 with the spectacular line 17. ♜xd6! ♙xd6 18. ♙xd6 ♗xd6 19. ♜xe4+–, threatening ♜f6.

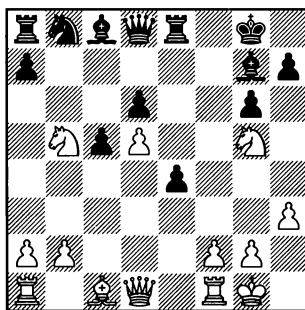
A) 12...f5?

Black restores the material balance with this move, but it is all going to end very badly for him.

13. 0–0

Here it is a mistake for White to play 13. ♜e6? because of 13... ♗a5+! 14. ♜c3 ♙xe6 15. 0–0 (15. dxe6 ♙xc3+ 16. bxc3 ♗xc3+ 17. ♙d2 ♗e5!±) 15...♙f7±

13...fxe4



14. ♖e1!

This move emphasizes the drawbacks of Black's 12th move. He has weakened his pawn structure through wanting to restore the material balance prematurely.

White has alternatives which also give him an edge, for example 14.♔f4, but the move 14.♖e1 is at least not worse.

Of course not 14.♘c3? e3! and Black cuts off the defence of the g5-knight and at the same time gets rid of his weak pawn, N.Brunner – Paragua, Oropesa del Mar 2000.

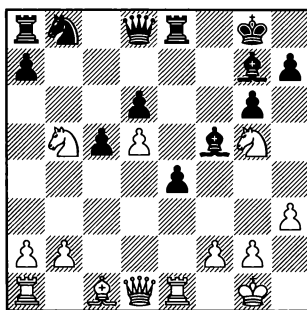
14...♙f5

It is useless for Black to play 14...♗b6, since White can counter this with 15.a4! (he can also play 15.♘c3, picking up the e4-pawn, Alburt – De Firmian, Jacksonville 1990) 15...♙f5 16.g4 ♕d7 17.♘xe4 ♙xb5 18.axb5 ♘d7 19.♖a6 ♗xb5 20.♙xd6 ♘e5 21.♖e6 ♖f8 22.♘c3 ♗b8 23.♖e3+-. If the knight moves from e5 White will have threats of d6, ♖f3 and ♘e4; instead, 23...c4 allows White to play 24.♖3xe5 ♙xe5 25.d6+- threatening ♗d5, and now it becomes clear why White did not capture the knight earlier with 23.♖1xe5, because then after 23...♙xe5 24.d6 Black could play 24...♙d4.

An attempt by Black to exchange pawns with 14...e3 fails because 15.♙xe3 ♙xb2 (he cannot play here 15...♖xe3 16.♖xe3+- and White's knight on g5 is indirectly protected, since Black's last rank is weak) is answered with 16.♖b1+-, leading to a position in which White's piece pressure is fatal for Black. He did not have to

suffer for very long after 16...♙f6 17.♘e6 (a more practical approach for White would be first to exchange his opponent's only active piece – his rook on e8 – with the move 17.♙f4+-) 17...♙xe6 18.dxe6 ♘a6 19.♙f4 d5 (19...♙e5 20.♗a4!+-) 20.♘d6+- and Black can simply resign, Gregor – P. Sott, Czech Republic 2007.

The move 14...♙a6 proves to be useless, since White can just ignore it and improve his position with 15.♘e6!+- with the threat of ♘bc7, with the point that 15...♙xe6 (15...♗d7 16.♘bc7+-) 16.dxe6 ♙xb5 fails to 17.♗d5+- and Black loses material.



15.g4

This is White's best move.

However, he also has the better position after 15.♙f4 ♙e5 16.♘xe4.

15...♙f6

It is bad for Black to play 15...h6 16.gxf5 hxf5 17.fxg6 (17.♗g4?! ♗d7∞ Tengely – Simon, Hungary 1993) 17...♗d7 18.♗h5! ♗xb5 19.♙xg5 ♗d7 20.♗h7+ ♘f8 21.♖e3+-

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♖xb5 ♖xe4 11. ♙xe4 ♖e8 12. ♖g5

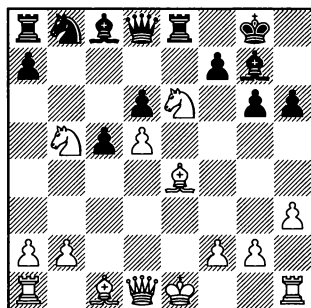
with ideas of ♖ae1 or ♙h6.

16. gxf5

This move seems safer than 16. ♖xh7!? ♖xh7 17. gxf5± although this also leads to a great advantage for White.

16... ♙xg5 17. ♙xg5 ♖xg5+ 18. ♖g4+- with ideas of ♖c7 or ♖xd6.

B) 12... h6!? 13. ♖e6!



This excellent shot is the point of the move 12. ♖g5.

13... ♖a5+

Black's alternatives lead immediately to a decisive advantage for White. For example:

13... fxe6? 14. 0-0+- with threats of dxe5 or ♙xg6;

13... ♙xe6? 14. dxe6 ♖xe6 15. 0-0 ♖xe4 16. ♖d5 ♖b4 17. ♖xd6+- with numerous threats: ♙xh6, ♖xa8 and ♖xf7.

14. ♖c3 ♙xc3+

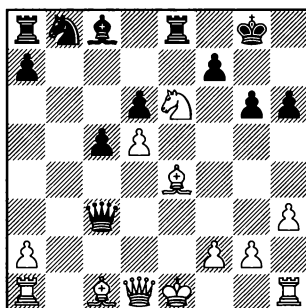
The move 14... fxe6? gives White time to play 15. 0-0+-

It does not help Black to insert 14... ♙a6? 15. f3!? (planning ♖f2; it also seems very good for White

to continue here with 15. ♖c2!?, with the idea of vacating the d1-square for his king after 15... fxe6 16. dxe6 ♖xe6 17. ♖d1+-, and after 15... ♖c6 16. ♖xg7 ♖b4 17. ♖d2 ♖d3+ 18. ♖e2!+- the possible discovered checks are ineffective) 15... fxe6 16. dxe6 ♙xc3+ 17. bxc3 ♖xc3+ 18. ♖f2 ♖xa1 19. ♙xa8+- and the unsafe position of Black's king is the decisive factor in the evaluation of this position.

15. bxc3 ♖xc3+

Black has no choice, for example if 15... ♙xe6?? 16. dxe6 ♖xe6 17. 0-0 ♖xe4 18. ♖d5+- he suffers huge material loss.



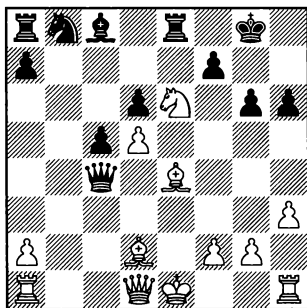
16. ♙d2

White has a space advantage and the initiative, so it would suit Black to exchange queens, since this would facilitate his defence. However, after 16. ♖d2 ♖xd2+ (it is too risky to try to win material with 16... ♖xa1 17. 0-0 ♖h8, because now after 18. ♖e1±, threatening ♖c7 and ♙b2, Black's defence is very difficult) 17. ♖xd2 fxe6 18. f4!?± – White still has much the better prospects, thanks

to the advantage of the bishop pair in this open position and his extra space (after 18.♔c3 Black can close the centre advantageously with 18...e5, for example: 19.♙xh6 ♙f5 20.f3 ♜d7∞ and in a position with a closed centre he has nothing to fear, D.Berg – F.Pieri, Montecatini Terme 1994).

16...♞c4

Black can reduce the tension with 16...♞e5?, but White is able to castle and Black suffers gravely from the lack of development of his queenside: 17.0–0 ♙xe6 18.dxe6 ♞xe4 19.exf7+ ♜xf7 20.♞e1 ♞d5 21.♙xe8 ♜xe8 22.♞a4+ ♞c6 (22...♜c6 23.♞d1+–) 23.♞e1+– Grillitsch – Schirmbeck, Velden 1994.



17.♞f3!?

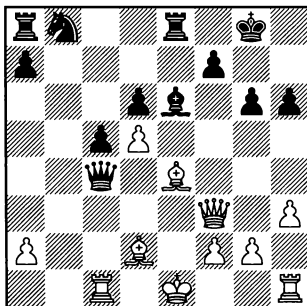
In the diagram position White has several very attractive ways to continue. They each have a different character, but they all provide him with an advantage.

He maintains a stable edge after simplifying into an endgame:

17.♞c2!? ♞xc2 18.♙xc2 ♜h7 (Black fails to solve his problems with 18...fxe6 19.♙xg6 ♞e7 20.0–0–0± Radulski – A.Danilovic, Bijeljina Dvorovi 2000) 19.0–0–0 fxe6 20.h4 h5 21.♙a5!? e5 (Black loses even more pawns following 21...exd5 22.♞xd5 ♜c6 23.♞xh5±) 22.♙c7± and he has difficulty in protecting his pawn weaknesses and furthermore his queenside is not developed;

17.♞e2 ♞xe2+ 18.♜xe2 fxe6 (18...♜a6 19.♙xh6 fxe6 20.♙xg6 ♞e7 21.♜d2± with ideas of 21...exd5 22.♞ae1± or 21.h4± and Black is unlikely to equalize.) 19.dxe6 ♞xe6 20.♜f3 ♞xe4 21.♜xe4 ♙b7+ 22.♜d3 ♜c6 23.f3 – Black's compensation for the exchange is insufficient.

17...♙xe6 18.♞c1



18...♞a4

After 18...♞xa2?, Black reduces his pressure against the bishop on e4 and White can capture: 19.dxe6 ♞xe6 20.0–0 ♞xe4 21.♞fe1!+–

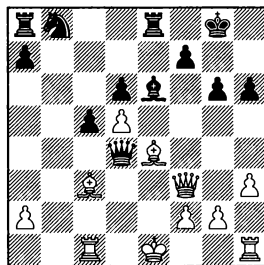
9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♜xb5 ♜xe4 11. ♙xe4 ♞e8 12. ♜g5

It is weaker for Black to play immediately 18... ♙g4 19. ♞xc4 ♙xf3 20. gxf3 f5 21. ♞g1 ♜h7 22. ♙f4 fxe4 23. fxe4 ♜d7 (23... ♞d8 24. ♞c3± and White has the powerful threat of ♞cg3 when, despite the fact that there are just a few pieces left on the board, Black's king is rather unsafe, as the following variation illustrates: 24... ♜a6? 25. ♞cg3 g5 26. ♙xg5! hxg5 27. ♞xg5. The king is in a mating net. 27... ♜h6 28. ♞g6+ ♜h5 29. ♞1g5+ ♜h4 30. ♞g4+ ♜h5 31. ♞6g5+ ♜h6 32. f4 and 33. ♞h4#) 24. ♙xd6 ♜b6 25. ♞xc5 ♞xe4+ 26. ♜f1 ♞c8 27. ♞g4± Poluljahov – Glyanets, Moscow 1991.

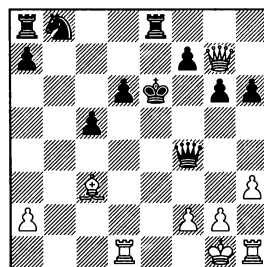
It is too risky for Black to try 18... ♞d4 owing to 19. ♙c3!, creating quite dangerous threats for Black on the a1-h8 diagonal. (Instead, 19. 0–0 is premature and reduces White's pressure; we shall see later that he is not obliged to castle at all, since his king can find an excellent shelter on the d2-square: 19... ♙xh3 20. ♙c3 ♙xg2! 21. ♞f4! ♞xe4 – the only move – 22. ♞fe1 ♜d7 23. ♞xe4 ♙xe4 24. ♞xh6 f6± White's initiative is ebbing away and Black has chances of defending successfully, Golod – G.Gurevich, Israel 2004.)

(diagram)

19... ♞c4 (He fails to solve his problems with 19... ♙g4 20. hxg4 ♞xe4+ 21. ♜d2± and dark clouds are hanging over Black's position; it has become clear why White

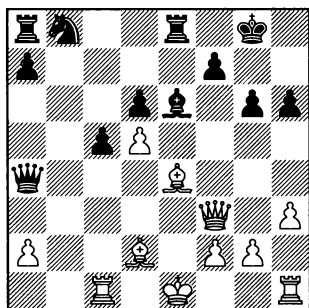


does not need to castle on move 19 – he has many more possibilities with his king on d2; instead of 20... ♞xe4+ it is no better for Black to play 20... ♞c4 21. ♜d2 ♞xe4 22. ♞d3!± and White is threatening ♞xh6 with dire consequences; in fact Black is beyond salvation now, whereas the immediate 22. ♞xh6 allows him to reach a defensible position at the price of only the exchange: 22... ♞d4+ 23. ♙xd4 ♞xd4+ 24. ♜e1 ♜d7± and although Black's compensation for the exchange is insufficient his position has improved considerably.) 20. ♞f6 ♞xe4+ 21. ♜f1 ♜f8 22. ♞g7+ ♜e7 23. dxe6 ♞c4+ 24. ♜g1 ♜xe6 25. ♞d1 ♞f4



26. h4! (planning ♞h3; White brings his last piece into play) 26... ♜c6 27. ♞h3 (with ideas of

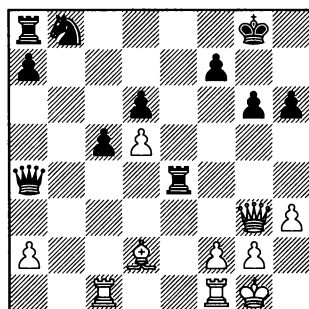
♞e3 or ♞f3). Black's extra central pawns as well as his kingside pawns are a cause of problems for him, and his king is rather unsafe in the centre under the coordinated fire of White's pieces. 27...♞g8 28.♞e3+ ♔d7 (after 28...♞e5 White wins with the spectacular move 29.♞xd6!+-) 29.♞h7 ♞gf8 30.♞f3 ♞xh4 31.♞g7 ♞a4 32.♞fd3±



19.0-0 ♞g4

The careless move 19...♞d7 invites disaster with 20.♞ce1+- (with threats of ♞xh6, ♞xg6, or ♞c3).

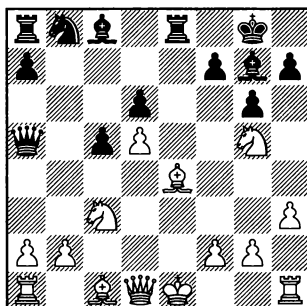
20.♞xg4 ♞xe4 21.♞g3



The dark squares around Black's monarch are weak and his

queenside is undeveloped, so this is not a good position for him. Losing the h6-pawn might not be so terrible for Black, but losing the d6-pawn might well prove decisive for the outcome of the game. It appears that he has nothing better than to sacrifice the exchange with **21...♞e5 22.♞c3** (22.♞xc5!?) **22...♞d7** (22...♞xd5? 23.♞f3 ♞c6 24.♞b1 ♞d7 25.♞bd1+-) **23.♞xe5** but his compensation is obviously insufficient. **23...♞xe5 24.f4±** with the threat of f5.

C) 12...♞a5+ 13.♞c3



13...♞a6!

This is the only move with which Black can try to keep the position rather unclear.

For 13...h6 14.♞e6 – see variation B.

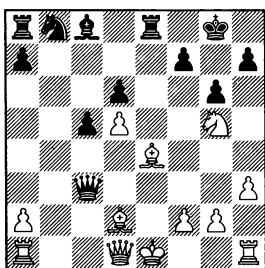
If Black tries to regain the sacrificed material immediately he gets into great difficulties.

13...f5? 14.0-0 ♞xc3 15.bxc3 fxe4 16.♞e1 ♞f5 17.g4 h6 18.gxf5

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♜xb5 ♜xe4 11. ♙xe4 ♞e8 12. ♜g5 ♞a5 13. ♜c3 ♙a6

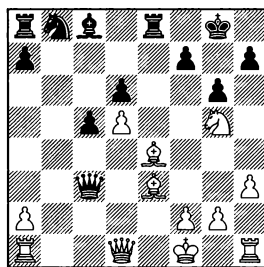
hxg5 19. ♙xg5 ♞xc3 20. ♞a4+- – Black has succeeded in restoring the material balance but is unable to defend against his opponent's numerous threats, because his queenside is completely undeveloped.

After 13... ♙xc3+ 14. bxc3 ♞xc3+ (if 14... h6 15. 0-0 hxg5 16. ♞c2 f5 17. ♙d3 ♞d8 18. ♞b1 ♜d7 19. ♞a4± then White's space advantage and his two strong and active bishops give him a clear advantage. Black has very weak pawns on the kingside and he lags in development, so his position will be very difficult to defend. The attempt to discomfort White's king with 14... ♙a6 15. ♙d2! ♞b5 can be countered with the standard response 16. f3!+- with the idea of ♜f2, solving all his problems and leaving Black's position in ruins. He loses after 15... f5 16. c4 ♞a3 17. ♞b3 ♞xb3 18. axb3 fxe4 19. ♜e6+-, or 15... ♙c4 16. ♞f3 f5 17. ♜e6! ♜d7 18. ♙xf5!+-) 15. ♙d2



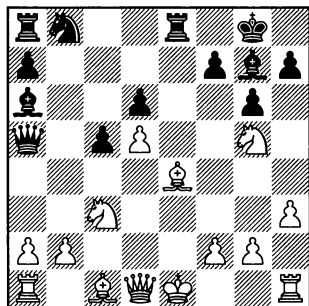
15... ♞d3 (in the variation 15... ♞c4, it is possible for White to respond in the standard manner with 16. f3!? f5 17. ♞c1 ♞d4 18.

♙f4±, or with the active line 16. ♞c1!? ♞xe4+ 17. ♜xe4 ♞xe4+ 18. ♞e2 ♞xe2+ 19. ♜xe2 ♙a6+ 20. ♜f3± when Black has no compensation for the exchange whatsoever. White wins spectacularly if Black tries to gobble up material with 18... ♞xg2? 19. ♞e8+ ♜g7 20. ♙c3+ ♜h6 21. ♞xf7! ♞xh1+ 22. ♜d2 ♞g2 23. ♞e1! ♜d7 24. ♞g7+ ♜g5 25. ♞e7+ ♜h5 26. ♞xh7+ ♜g5 27. h4+ ♜f4 28. ♞e7+- and his king is helpless against White's many threats.) 16. ♙e3 ♞c3+ 17. ♜f1



Now Black is almost forced to sacrifice the exchange with 17... ♞xe4 (he does not achieve anything with dubious queen moves such as 17... ♞f6 18. ♞b1 h6 19. ♜e6+- and Black's lag in development becomes fatal; an attempt to restore the material balance with 17... h6 18. ♜e6! fxe6 19. ♜g1! creates absolutely unsolvable problems for Black) 18. ♜xe4 ♞c4+ 19. ♜g1 ♞xe4 20. ♞d2 ♙b7 21. f3 (21. ♞e1!?±) 21... ♞xd5 (it is preferable for Black to defend with 21... ♞f5, but after 22. ♙h6 ♜d7 23. ♞e1 ♞xd5 24. ♞b2 ♞d4+ 25. ♞xd4 cxd4 26. ♞d1± he has no

compensation) 22. ♖xd5 ♙xd5
23. ♖d1+ – Mantovani – Aliberton,
Saint Vincent 2004.



From the diagram position we shall analyse the moves **C1) 14. ♙d2** and **C2) 14. ♖c2**, which preserve White's extra piece at the price of his king remaining in the centre, and his most practical decision – **C3) 14. f3!?**

C1) 14. ♙d2

If White so wishes, he may transpose later to the main line of the variation **C2**.

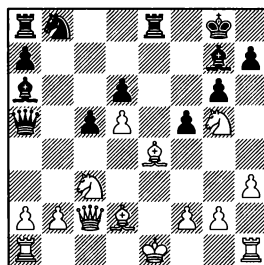
14... ♘d7

Attempts to avoid the main line are no good for Black at all, as I shall try to convince you.

14...h6? 15. ♘e6 fxe6 16. dxe6 ♜xe6 (the alternatives lose quickly for Black: 16... ♗b4 17. ♗g4+–; 16... ♘c6 17. ♙xc6 ♜xe6+ 18. ♘e4+–) 17. ♗g4 ♙c4 18. ♘d5 (it is also good for White to play 18. 0–0–0!? h5 19. ♗f3 ♘d7 20. ♙d3!± and Black's position becomes critical; it is too slow to play 18... ♘d7?! N. Straub

– Dworakowska, Germany 2000, since after 19. ♙d3+– Black's position is lost) 18... ♙xd5 19. ♗xe6+ ♙xe6 20. ♙xa5 d5 21. ♙xg6 ♘c6 22. ♙d2± and Black's compensation for the exchange is insufficient.

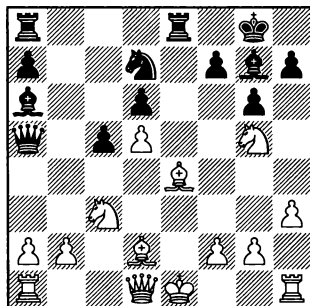
Black fails to solve his problems with 14...f5 15. ♖c2 (it is also possible for White to play 15. ♘e2!?±, with the idea of 0–0, or 15. ♘e6 and here Black's active play does not compensate adequately for the sacrificed piece: 15... ♘d7 16. ♙f3 ♘e5 17. ♙e2+– White parries all the threats and preserves the extra piece, M. Richter – Keil, Berlin 2008. Black also fails to gain enough compensation for the piece after 15...fxe4 16. ♘xe4 ♗b5 17. ♙c3±)



15...fxe4 (White wins too much material for the queen in the variation 15... ♘d7 16. ♘e6 ♘e5 17. f4 ♘c6 18. ♙xg7 ♘d4 19. ♘xe8 ♘xc2 20. ♙xc2 ♜xe8+ 21. ♘d1 and he will gradually bring his pieces into play, for example: 21... ♗b4 22. g4!? fxg4 23. hxg4 ♗d4 24. ♘c1± with the plan of f5, a4, ♙a1–a3, although that would have been

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♗xb5 ♗xe4 11. ♕xe4 ♖e8 12. ♗g5 ♜a5 13. ♗c3 ♕a6

Black's best chance) 16. ♗cxe4 ♜b6 17. ♕c3 ♕h6 18. 0-0-0+ and since White has more space, an extra pawn and excellent attacking chances against the enemy king, his advantage is overwhelming, C.Ramirez – J.Ostos, Cartagena 2000.



15.f4!?

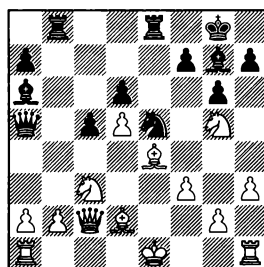
This is an interesting move which leads to original and rather unclear positions, which have not been thoroughly analysed yet.

15. ♜c2 leads to variation C2.

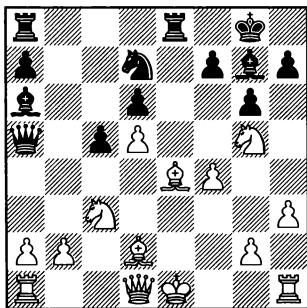
It is too slow for White to continue with 15. ♗e2?! ♜b5 16. a4 and here, whereas after the natural move 16... ♜xe2+ 17. ♜xe2 ♕xe2 18. ♗xe2 ♗f6 19. f3 h6 20. ♗e6 ♗xe4 21. ♗xg7 ♗g3+ 22. ♗d3 ♗xg7 23. ♖he1± and numerous exchanges White ends up with the better prospects in the endgame, with 16... ♜xb2!N 17. ♖b1 ♜e5 18. ♕f3 ♗f6 Black can seize the initiative, with full compensation for the sacrificed material.

White should refrain from 15. a4?! (with the idea of ♗b5), because after 15... ♜b6 16. ♜c2 f5 17. ♗b5 ♕xb5 the ensuing complications are advantageous for Black, Sturua – Wojtkiewicz, Katerini 1992.

15. f3?! This move cannot be recommended here. A single inaccuracy can place White's position in great danger, as illustrated by the following variations: 15... ♖ab8 (after 15... h6?! the move 16. ♗e6?! fails to 16... ♗xe6 17. ♕xg6 ♖e7, when Black has quite enough compensation for the pawn, but with 16. ♗xf7 ♗xf7 17. ♜c2 ♗e5 18. ♗f2± White succeeds in evacuating his king and preserving the extra pawn; it might be interesting for Black to try the active line: 15... ♗e5!? 16. ♗f2 ♗c4, with the idea of ♖ab8, when his pieces have occupied threatening positions and any inaccuracy on White's part could lead to his immediate demise; if 16. ♗e2, Black has a choice between 16... ♜b5 17. ♗f2 ♜xb2± and 16... ♜b6 17. 0-0 f5∞) 16. ♜c2!? (16. a4!? with the idea ♗b5) 16... ♗e5



17.♔f2 (after 17.♘e2 ♖b5 – 17...♗d8!? 18.♔f2!?∞ – 18.♙c3 ♘d3+ 19.♙xd3 ♗xd3 20.♗xd3 ♙xd3 21.♘e4 f5 22.♘4g3? ♙xc3+ 23.bxc3 ♙xe2± Black sets his opponent difficult problems; or 22. ♙xg7 ♔xg7 23.0–0–0 fxe4 24.♘f4 c4± and White must fight for equality) 17...♙d3! (better than 17...f5 18.♘e6 fxe4?! 19.♘xe4 ♖b6 20.♘xg7 ♔xg7, since White manages to protect the important d3-square just in time by pinning the enemy knight on e5 with 21.♙c3±; interesting complications arise after 18...♙h8!?, for example 19. ♔g3!? ♘c4 20.♙d3 ♗xb2 21.♘a4 ♗xd2 22.♘xb2 ♗xc2 23.♙xc2 ♘xb2 24.♘c7±) 18.♗a4 ♗xa4 19. ♘xa4 h6± – Black's pieces dominate the entire board and this more than compensates for the sacrificed piece.



15...♙d4

15...♗ab8!? 16.♗c2 f5 17.♔f2 (17.0–0–0!?) White's king can run away from the enemy attack but after 17...fxe4 18.♘cxe4 ♖b6∞ the position remains rather un-

clear. Previously White tried the standard idea 17.♘e6 fxe4 18. ♘xe4 ♖b5 19.♙c3, K.Movsziszian – M.Voigt, Hamburg 1992, but after 19...♙xc3+!N 20.bxc3 ♖b6 (it would also be interesting to try 20...♗c4, because now after 21. ♗d1 Black can play 21...♖b6 with the idea of ♙b7; therefore White should continue with 21.0–0–0! ♖b6 22.♗he1 ♖eb8∞, but his defence will be very difficult and any inaccuracy might prove fatal) 21. ♔f2 ♗d3 22.♗xd3 ♙xd3± White must fight for equality.

After 15...f5 16.♔f2 fxe4 17. ♘cxe4 ♗d8 18.♙c3± the ensuing exchange of the dark-squared bishops will highlight a new weak point in Black's camp – the f6-square, compounding the existing weakness on e6.

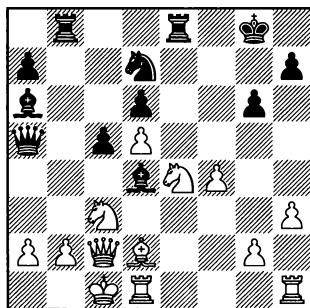
It might be interesting for Black to try 15...h6 16.♘e6!? (16. ♘xf7 ♔xf7 17.♔f2 ♘f6 18.♗e1 ♖b4 19.♗c2 ♗d4+ 20.♔g3 ♘xe4 21. ♘xe4 ♗xd5=) 16...fxe6 17.dxe6 ♗xe6 18.♔f2 ♖b8 19.♙d5 ♘f8 20. ♗c2!? (20.♖b1 ♔h7) 20...♔h7 21. ♗he1!?

16.♗c2 f5 17.0–0–0 fxe4 18.♘gxe4 ♖ab8

This position offers chances for both sides, since Black's attack against the enemy king appears to compensate for the sacrificed pawn. However, White has some justification for believing that he can defend successfully, since he

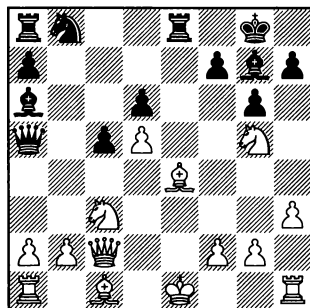
9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♖xb5 ♖xe4 11. ♗xe4 ♗e8 12. ♖g5 ♗a5 13. ♖c3 ♗a6

has a space advantage and his pieces are well centralised.



19. ♗he1!? White fortifies his position in the centre, after which Black has problems in finding an effective plan of attack, for example: **19... ♗c7** (19... ♗b6 20. ♖a4!± with the idea of ♗c3) **20. ♖b1!?** with the plan of ♗c1, ♖a1 and f5↑

C2) 14. ♗c2



14... ♖d7

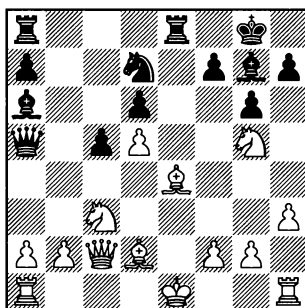
The main difference between 14. ♗d2 ♖d7 15. ♗c2 and 14. ♗c2 ♖d7 is that the latter offers White another option in 15. ♖d1, but

whether this is an improvement remains rather unclear.

14...f5 15. ♗d2 fxe4? (15... ♖d7 16. ♖e6 – see 14... ♖d7) 16. ♖cxe4 ♗b6 17. ♗c3+–

15. ♗d2

15. ♖d1!? This move has not been analysed yet and its correct evaluation is quite difficult, because the position is non-standard. One thing is clear, however: Black has a dangerous and enduring initiative for the piece and White needs to have “nerves of steel” to enter this position voluntarily. A possible continuation is 15... ♗ab8 (15... ♖b6!?) 16. ♗e1 ♗b4!±∞



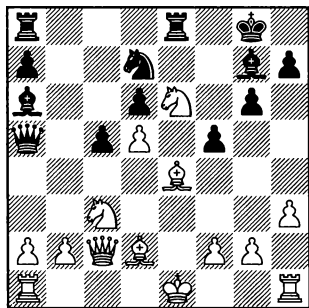
After 15. ♗d2, we shall deal with these possibilities: **C2a) 15...f5** and **C2b) 15... ♖e5**.

For 15... ♗ab8 16. 0–0–0 ♖e5 – see variation **C2b**.

C2a) 15...f5 16. ♖e6

It might be interesting for White to try 16. g4!± fxe4 17. ♖cxe4 with the idea of answering 17... ♗b5 with 18. 0–0–0, for example:

18...♖ab8 19.♙c3 ♗xc3 20.♜xc3 ♜a4 21.♘e6 ♞e7 22.♘xd6 ♜xa2 (after the seemingly attractive move 22...♖b6, White has the spectacular shot 23.♘f5! gxf5 24. gxf5 ♜c4 25.♞hg1+ ♔f7 26.d6±) 23.♜a3± and Black must fight for equality in this endgame.

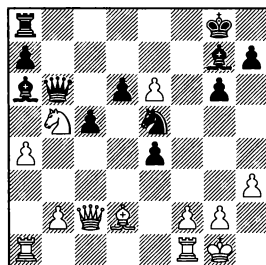


16...♘e5

The move 16...fxe4?! fails to solve his problems. after 17.♘xe4 ♜b5 (after the cunning move 17... ♜b6 White should reply, not with the impulsive 18.0-0-0? ♙d3!±, but simply with 18.♘xg7 ♞xe4+ 19.♜xe4 ♜xb2 20.♞b1 ♜xg7 21. ♜e6+ ♔h8? 22.♞c1!+-, planning ♙b3; or 21...♞f7 22.♔d1!± and Black has no compensation whatsoever for the sacrificed material) 18.0-0-0 (18.♙c3!? ♗xc3+ 19. ♘xc3 ♜a5 20.0-0-0± Bischoff – Pirrot, Germany 1990) 18...♖ab8 19.♙c3+- White's pieces are well centralised and he has more space and an extra pawn. Black's queenside initiative will be neutralised after the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. J.Votava – Knazovcik, Pardubice 1992.

17.f4

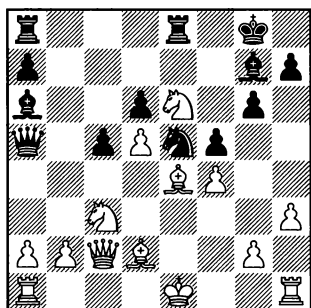
It also looks good for White to play 17.a4!?, with the idea of blocking the a6-f1 diagonal against Black's light-squared bishop with the move ♘b5 and then castling kingside: 17...fxe4 18.♘b5 ♜b6 19.0-0 ♞xe6 20. dxe6. The position is still very complicated, but White's extra exchange should prevail over Black's active possibilities.



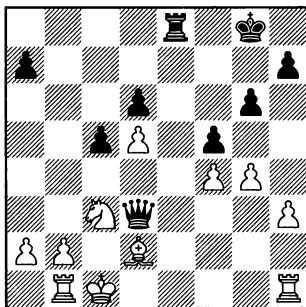
20...d5 21.♜b3 ♜b7 22.♙c3 d4 23.♙d2±, Black fails to achieve anything concrete by advancing his central pawns.

20...♙b7 21.e7 a6 22.♙a5! White deflects the enemy queen from the protection of the d6-pawn. (Black would be happier after 22.♘c3 d5±) 22...♜xa5 23. ♘xd6 ♙c6 24.♞ac1 ♙f6 25.♜xc5 ♜xc5 26.♞xc5 ♙xa4 (Black has great problems in the rook and pawn ending with a pawn down arising after 26...♙xe7 27.♞xe5 ♙xd6 28.♞e6 ♞d8 29.♞d1 ♙h2+ 30.♔xh2 ♞xd1 31.♞xc6±) 27.♘xe4 ♘d7 28.♞a5 ♙b5 29.♞d1 ♙xe7 30.♞xb5 axb5 31.♞xd7 ♔f7 32. ♔f1± and Black will have to fight long and hard for a draw.

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♖xb5 ♖xe4 11. ♙xe4 ♜e8 12. ♖g5 ♜a5 13. ♖c3 ♙a6



♙d3 24. ♙xd3 ♜xd3 25. ♜b1,
with the idea b3 and ♜b2-c2.



17... ♖c6!

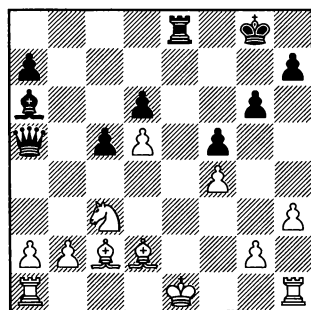
This is played with the idea of ♖d4.

17... ♖c4? 18. ♙d3+- Lehmann – Keil, Berlin 1994.

18. ♖xg7!?

The prophylactic line 18. ♜d1 ♜xe6 19. dxe6 fxe4∞ leads to a very complicated position in which Black has a dangerous initiative for the sacrificed exchange.

18... ♖d4 19. ♖xe8 ♖xc2+ 20. ♙xc2 ♜xe8+

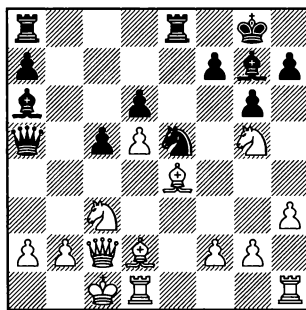


21. ♙d1

After 21. ♙f2, Black has a perpetual check: 21... ♜e2+ 22. ♖xe2 ♜xd2 23. ♙d1 ♙xe2 24. ♙xe2 ♜xf4+ 25. ♙e1 ♜b4=

21... ♜b4 22. ♙c1 ♜d4 23. g4

C2b) 15... ♖e5 16. 0-0-0



16... f5!

After 16... ♜ab8 White plays 17. ♜h1 with the idea of responding to 17... ♖c4 (or 17... f5 18. f4! fxe4 19. fxe5 ♙d3 20. ♜a4+-; it would be futile to try 18... ♖c4, because after 19. ♙xf5!+-, the pawn on b2 is not hanging, so the inclu-

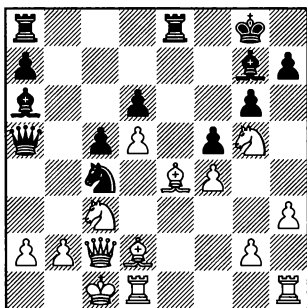
sion of this move is in White's favour and Black has to worry about how to save his king) with 18.♔d3! and Black has nothing better than to follow a forcing line into a very difficult position: 18...♞xe1 19. ♞xe1 ♖xb2 20.♙xa6 ♜xa6 21. ♞xb2 ♞xb2 22.♞e8+ ♔f8 23.♙xb2, where White enjoys both a positional and material advantage.

17.f4!?

17.a4!? fxe4 18.♖cxe4∞

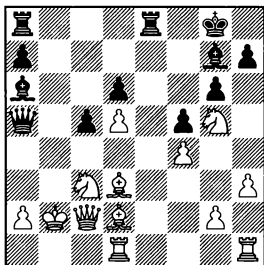
17.♖a4!?!∞

17...♖c4



18.♙xf5

It was once considered that White was winning after 18.♙d3 ♖xb2 19.♙xb2 (he should refrain from 19.♙xa6 ♞eb8∞),

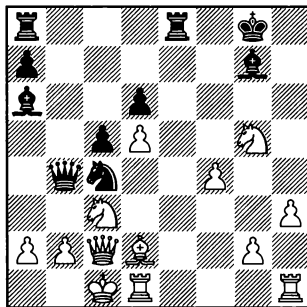


but the fantastic move 19...

♞e3!! overturned that evaluation (after 19...♙xd3? 20.♞xd3 c4 21. ♞c2?! ♞ab8+ 22.♙a1 ♞b3 23.♞he1 ♞eb8 24.♞b1+– Black's attack is non-existent and White is two pieces up, Murali Krishnan – Turov, Mumbai 2010; or 21...♞e2 22.♙c1!+– with the idea of ♞a4; it is safer for White to play instead 21.♞f3!+– with the plan of ♙a1, ♞c1-c2). White has nothing better here than to play 20.♙c1 (he loses after 20.♙xa6 ♞b8+–) 20...♙xd3 21.♞a4 ♞xa4 22.♖xa4 ♞e2∞ (with the threat of ♞b8), and even though there are only a few pieces left on the board Black still exerts powerful pressure.

18...gxf5 19.♞xf5 ♞b4

20.♞xh7+ ♔f8 21.♞f5+ ♔g8 22.♞c2



22...♖xb2!

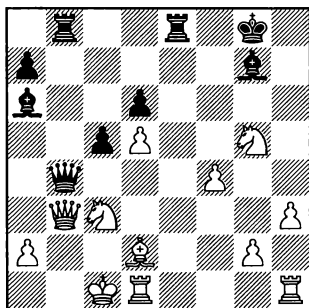
It is bad for Black to play 22...♞ab8, since after 23.♞he1! (or 23.♞de1!) 23...♞xe1 24.♞xe1 ♞xb2+ 25.♞xb2 ♖xb2 (the alternative capture loses for Black: 25...♞xb2 26.♞e8+ ♔f8 27.♖e6+–) 26.♞e3!?! (planning ♞g3) he will have difficulty proving that he has

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♜xb5 ♜xe4 11. ♙xe4 ♞e8 12. ♜g5 ♞a5 13. ♜c3 ♙a6

compensation for the missing pawns.

23. ♞xb2 ♞ab8 24. ♞b3

After the exchange of queens Black's pressure on the c-file increases: 24. ♞xb4?! cxb4 25. ♜ce4 ♞ec8 with more than enough compensation for the sacrificed material. After White's forced reply 26. ♙c3 bxc3 27. ♜xd6, Black can play 27...c2 28. ♜xc8 cxd1 ♞+ 29. ♞xd1 ♞xc8+ when White's pawns are going nowhere, whereas Black's two active bishops, one of which is an extra piece, dominate the whole board.



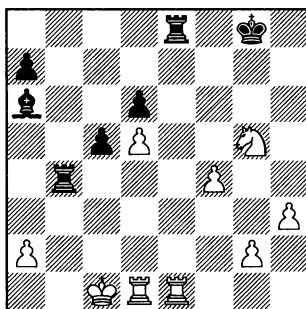
24... ♙xc3

This is best. Now once again a single inaccuracy by White will be absolutely fatal for him. However, his pieces are well centralised and he has chances of a successful defence, retaining his material advantage in the process.

It is a mistake for Black to continue with 24... ♞d4, owing to 25. ♞de1!+–, bringing the last piece into action: 25... ♞xe1+ (25... ♞f8 26. ♜e6+– and Black's queen has

no good retreat) 26. ♞xe1 ♞xb3 27. ♞e8+ ♙f8 28. axb3! (better than 28. ♞xf8+ ♜xf8 29. ♜e6+ ♜e7 30. ♜xd4 cxd4 31. axb3 dxc3 32. ♙xc3 ♙f1± when the presence of bishops of opposite colour makes the realisation of White's extra material extremely difficult) 28... ♞g1+ 29. ♜c2 ♞xg2 30. f5+– with the idea of ♜e6, and Black's defensive problems are unsolvable. However, it would be a mistake for White to play 30. ♜e6? ♞g6=

25. ♞xb4 ♙xb4 26. ♙xb4 ♞xb4 27. ♞he1



27... ♞c4+!

The position might look very simple, but Black must remain on the alert.

The careless response 27... ♞eb8 28. ♞e6!± gives White additional possibilities.

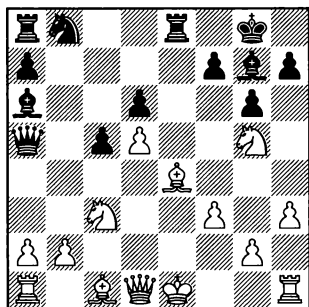
28. ♜b2 ♞b8+ 29. ♜a1 ♞c2!?

Here it would be interesting to try 29... ♞xf4!?

30. ♞b1 ♞xb1+

Black's pieces are very active, compensating for his material deficit, so he should not lose.

C3) 14.f3!?



This move is sufficiently strong and, more importantly, it is completely practical.

I am not going to assert that it is absolutely the best move for White, since the position is too rich in possibilities, but it is definitely the most practical. He gives back the piece and can seize the initiative while Black is busy regaining his sacrificed material.

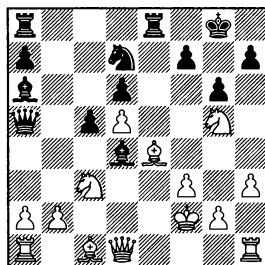
14...gxc3+

Black should not delay this capture.

He will have nothing but problems after the active try 14...gxc3+ 15.gxc3 f5 (the least of the evils for Black would be 15...d7 16.e2!? ♖b6 17.gxc3!?±; 17.dxc4!? cxd4 18.f2!? or 18.e1!?, intending ♔f2±) 16.e6 fxe4 17.dxe4 ♖b6 18.gxc3+–, when his minimal material deficit is not fatal but his queenside is undeveloped and his temporary activity disappears after the exchanges: 18...gxc3+ (Black's position will not improve

after 18...d7, since after the prophylactic move 19.♗d2, protecting the king from the checks on the a5–e1 diagonal, White's threat of ♔xd4, followed by exploiting the weak dark squares on the kingside, becomes decisive) 19.bxc3 ♔d7 20.♔f2 ♔h8 21.♔g3 ♖e7 22.♖b1 ♗a5 23.♗d2 1-0 Rublevsky – Haburdzania, Alma-Ata 1991.

It is too slow to play 14...d7, in view of 15.♔f2 and Black is unlikely to restore the material balance. For example: 15...gxc3+ (15...♖ab8?! 16.♗c2±)

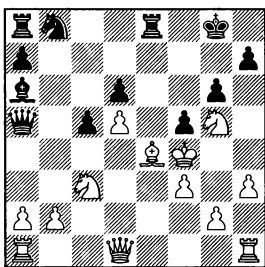


16.♔g3N (in practice White has tried the less principled line 16.gxc3 gxc3+ 17.♔xe3 ♖ab8 18.♗c2 ♔e5 19.♔f2 ♔d3 20.♗a4± Ry-chagov – Nevostrujev, St Petersburg 1994; 18...f5 19.♖hd1!?±; 18...♗d8!? 19.h4 h6 20.♔xf7 ♔xf7 21.♔f2±) 16...gxc3+ (if 16...d7 17.♗c2!+–) 17.♔f4 ♔xf4+ 18.♔xf4 h6 19.♔e6 ♖ab8 20.♔g3± and Black's desire to restore the material balance will lead to the appearance of considerable weaknesses on the kingside.

Black cannot regain his sacri-

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♖xb5 ♖xe4 11. ♗xe4 ♞e8 12. ♖g5 ♞a5 13. ♖c3 ♗a6

ficed material with the risky line:
14...f5 15. ♖f2 ♗d4+ (15...fxe4 16.
♗cxe4 ♖d7 17. ♖e6± planning
♗d2-c3 and ♞e1) 16. ♖g3 ♗e5+
17. ♗f4 ♗xf4+ (17...♞d8 18. h4
♗xf4+ 19. ♖xf4 and here 19...♞f6?
fails to 20. ♖g3 fxe4 21. ♖cxe4+-;
or 20...h6 21. ♖e6 fxe4 22. ♞a4+-;
relatively best is 19...fxe4 20.
♖cxe4 ♖d7 21. ♖e6 ♞e7 22. ♖g3±)
18. ♖xf4



White's king is able to roam
the board with impunity only be-
cause of his space advantage and
the fact that Black's queenside is
undeveloped. 18...♞b4 (for 18...
♞d8 19. h4 – see 17...♞d8) 19. ♞a4
(19. ♖g3 is also good) 19...♞e7 20.
♖g3 h6 21. ♖e6 ♞xa4 22. ♖xa4
fxe4 23. fxe4 ♖c6 (Black fails to
dislodge the enemy knight with
23...♗c8, since White can counter
with the spectacular riposte 24.
e5!+- Budnikov – Keil, Berlin

1992.) 24. ♖exc5 dxc5 25. dxc6+-
and Black remains two pawns
down.

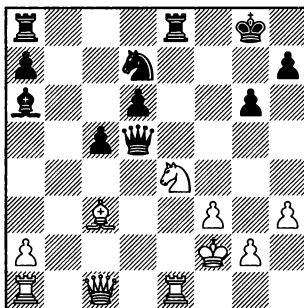
**15. bxc3 ♞xc3+ 16. ♗d2 ♞d4
17. ♞c1! f5 18. ♗c3 ♞xd5**

It is futile for Black to play
18...♞d3, because after 19. ♖f2
White's monarch escapes from
the threats, while Black's prob-
lems are just beginning.

19. ♖f2

19. ♖xh7!? ♖xh7 20. ♞g5± with
the idea of 20...♞e5? 21. ♞d1+-

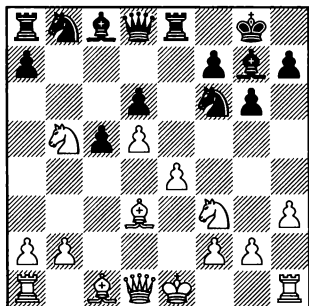
**19...fxe4 20. ♖xe4 ♖d7 21.
♞e1±**



Although Black has gained
some material, this is small con-
solation for his weak dark squares.
White's pieces are very active and
he retains a considerable advan-
tage.

Chapter 13

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0-0 9.♘f3 b5 10.♘xb5 ♖e8



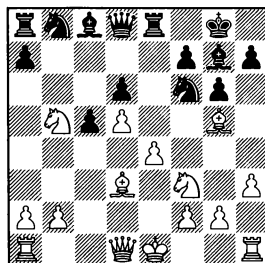
11.♘d2

This move undoubtedly deserves a thorough analysis. Like 10.♙xb5, it is not only interesting from the point of view of the development of the 9...b5 variation, but it also enables the reader to gain a better grasp of the niceties of the main variations and to have an enriched understanding to apply in practical games. I cannot just tell you “this is the main line, play like this, these are the best moves”, since then the reasons behind them and the intricacies of the positions arising would remain a mystery to you. This opening book, just like my previous opening monographs, is aimed mainly at improving the playing

level of the reader. In fact, the variations presented here are of great practical interest.

After 11.♘c3 ♘xe4 12.♘xe4 f5↑, White would be happy to sacrifice a pawn in order to neutralize his opponent’s rather unpleasant pressure.

It might also be interesting to try 11.♙g5, but I cannot recommend this move.



Now White’s plans are easily realised after 11...h6 12.♙xf6 ♙xf6 13.0-0 – his space advantage and more actively deployed pieces provide him with a stable advantage. For example, it is rather risky for Black to try to regain his pawn immediately with 13...♙xb2

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♜xb5 ♖e8 11. ♜d2 ♜xd5

in view of 14. ♖b1 ♗g7 15. ♜d2↑ with ideas of ♜a3-c4 or ♜f4 and e5;

it is good for Black to play 11... c4!? 12. ♗xc4 ♖xe4+ 13. ♗e2 ♜a5+ 14. ♜d2 (the position is approximately equal after the more natural line: 14. ♜c3 ♜xd5 15. 0-0 ♜xc3 16. bxc3 ♜d7=; if 14. ♜f1 ♗a6 15. a4 ♜bd7∞ and the complications are advantageous for Black) 14... ♗a6. Now the position is unclear after 15. ♜c3 ♗xe2 16. ♜xe2 ♜bd7 17. 0-0 ♖ee8↑, or 15. a4 ♗xb5 16. axb5, because of Black's spectacular response 16... ♖xe2+! 17. ♜xe2 ♜xb5+ 18. ♜e1 ♜xb2∞;

11... ♜b6. This is a very logical move. Black removes his queen from the pin and increases his pressure against the b2-pawn. 12. ♗xf6 This is an equally logical reply (it is risky for White to castle prematurely: 12. 0-0 ♜xe4 13. ♖e1 ♗d7↑ and he has problems; after 12. ♜d2 ♜xe4 13. ♜xe4 f5∞, Black succeeds in developing his pieces and White will find it hard to exploit his opponent's pawn-weaknesses) 12... ♗xf6 13. 0-0 (it is bad for White to hold on to his extra pawn: 13. ♜c2?! ♜a6 14. a3 c4!↑;

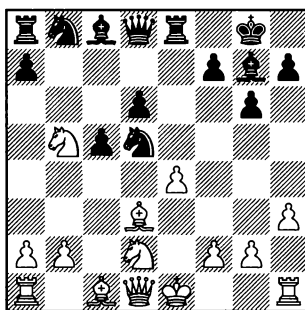
but not 14... ♗d7?! 15. ♜c3 ♖ab8, Kalinichev – Semeniuk, Leningrad 1989, 16. 0-0 ♜xb2 17. ♜xb2 ♖xb2 18. e5!±) 13... a6 14. ♜a3 ♜xb2 15. ♜c2∞ and the position is still one of dynamic equality.

Now we shall analyse two approximately equally strong possi-

bilities for Black **A) 11... ♜xd5!?** and **B) 11... ♜xe4**.

A) 11... ♜xd5!?

I have failed to find a clear advantage for White here. The position is very complex and rather unclear and only tournament practice will confirm or refute the correctness of my evaluation.



We shall deal now with **A1) 12. 0-0** and **A2) 12. ♜c4**.

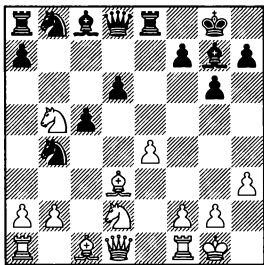
A1) 12. 0-0 ♜c7N

Black is not trying to discover anything miraculous, but simply exchanges his opponent's active knight and thus reduces the pressure against his d6-pawn. The position is definitely rather tense. The outcome will depend on the strength of the players, since White cannot brag about having achieved opening advantage...

It is too risky for Black to play 12... ♜f4 13. ♜c4 ♜xd3 14. ♜xd3 ♗a6 15. a4!?! (15. ♜cxd6 – see 12... ♜b4 13. ♜c4 ♗a6 14. ♜cxd5 ♜xd3

15. ♖xd3 15... ♜c6 (the immediate capture is inferior: 15... ♙xb5 16. axb5 ♙d4?! 17. ♙e3± and Black has serious problems.) 16. ♜cxd6 (White does not achieve much with 16. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 17. ♜cxd6 ♙e6=, or 17... ♙e7!? 18. ♙g5 ♙d7, with the idea of ♜d4↑ when Black does not risk much and his minimal material deficit is only temporary, Ambartsoumian – Wang Zili, Beijing 1991.) 16... ♙xb5 17. axb5 ♜b4 18. ♖d1 ♙e6 19. ♙f4↑ and White's knight on d6 is like a bone in Black's throat...

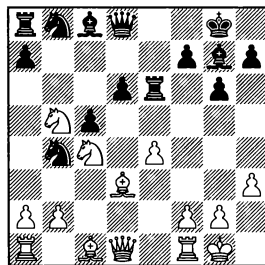
12... ♜b4!?



13. ♙c4!? (13. ♙e2!?) 13... ♙e6!? (13... a6 14. ♜c3 ♙e6 15. ♙xe6 ♙xe6 16. ♜f3±, planning ♙f4, and Black must worry about the protection of his d6-pawn) 14. ♙xe6 ♙xe6 15. ♜f3 ♖d7 16. ♜c3 c4∞

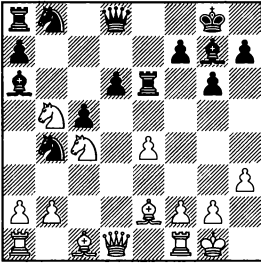
It is less effective for White to play 13. ♜c4. After the accurate reply 13... ♙e6! White must already think about equalising. (It is interesting, but not more than that, for Black to try 13... ♙a6!? 14. ♜cxd6 ♜xd3 15. ♖xd3 ♙e6 16. ♖d5 ♜c6 but here 17. ♙e3!± creates serious problems for Black; it would

be weaker for White to play 17. ♙g5, because after the rather original move 17... ♖b8! Black equalises: 18. ♖xc6 ♙xb5 19. ♖xb5 ♖xd6 20. ♙e3 ♖b8=. In a recent game of mine I encountered 17... ♖d7?!, and my response was inadequate: I played 18. f4? and after 18... ♖b8±, I had some problems, Dreev – Belozerov, Vladivostok 2012. It was much stronger to continue with the spectacular 18. ♜xf7! ♖xf7 19. ♜c7 ♖xc7 20. ♖xe6+ ♜h8 21. ♖fd1± threatening ♙d7 and setting Black some difficult problems...)

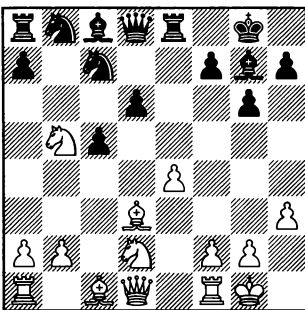


14. ♙e2 (the straightforward 14. ♙f4?! enables Black to seize the initiative after 14... ♙a6 15. a4 ♜8c6 with the idea of ♜d4↑ and now White cannot play 16. ♜cxd6? ♜xd3 17. ♖xd3 ♙xb5 18. axb5 ♜e5–+ since he loses his knight on d6. The alternatives provide Black with even better chances: 15. ♜bxd6 ♜xd3 16. ♖xd3 ♙xc4 17. ♖xc4 ♙xd6±, or 15. ♜cxd6 ♙xd6 16. ♙xd6 ♜xd3 17. ♖xd3 ♙xb5 18. ♖xb5 ♖xd6± Shishkin – Kononenko, Evpatoria 2007 and in both cases White must fight for a draw) 14... ♙a6

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♗xb5 ♖e8 11. ♗d2 ♗xd5 12. ♗c4



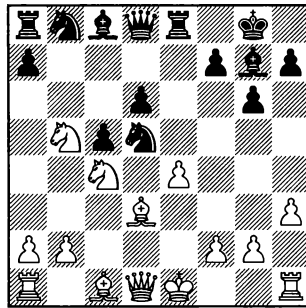
15. ♗c3 (it is too dangerous to try 15. a4 ♗8c6 16. ♗g4 ♖xe4 17. ♗cxd6, Nickoloff – R.Stone, Canada 1995, 17... ♗xb5!, planning ♗d4, and here after 18. ♗xb5 a6 or 18. axb5 ♗d4 Black has no problems whatsoever, while White must try to deal urgently with the activity of Black's pieces; or 16. ♗e3!? ♖e7!? 17. ♗f3 ♗d4↑) 15... ♗d7. Black completes his development, simultaneously protecting the d6-pawn. There might follow 16. ♗e3 ♗b6 17. ♗xb6 ♖xb6 18. ♖e1 ♖ae8 19. ♖d2 ♗xe2 20. ♖xe2 ♗c6 (with the idea of ♗d4) when Black's pieces are very actively placed and the weakness of his d6-pawn is almost irrelevant, V. Shishkin – D.Kononenko, Khar-kov 2007.



13. ♗xc7 ♖xc7 14. ♗c4 ♗c6 15. ♗f4 ♗e5!? The activity of Black's pieces compensates for his slight pawn weaknesses. The positions arising after 15... ♖e6!? are much less clear.

A2) 12. ♗c4

Instead of spending a tempo on castling, White attacks the d6-pawn as soon as possible.



A2a) 12... ♗b4

A2b) 12... ♖e6!N

For 12... ♗a6 13. ♗cxd6 (13. ♗bxd6 ♗b4) 13... ♗b4 14. 0-0 ♗xd3 15. ♖xd3 – see 12... 0-0 ♗b4 13. ♗c4 ♗a6 14. ♗cxd6 ♗d3.

Black loses the d6-pawn without compensation after 12... ♗f8? 13. ♗e2!±

A2a) 12... ♗b4 13. ♗e2

For 13. ♗cxd6 ♗xd3+ 14. ♖xd3 ♗a6 15. 0-0 – see variation A1.

13... ♗a6!

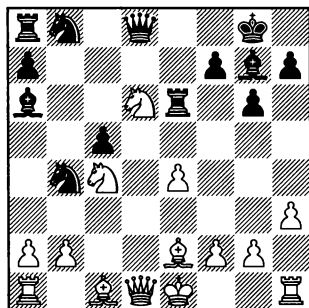
This is Black's best move!

He should refrain from 13...
 ♖xe4 14.♟cxd6 ♖xe2+ 15.♞xe2
 ♙e6 (after 15...♙a6, V.Lazarev –
 Cebalo, Cannes 1995, 16.♞e4!±
 Black's compensation for the sac-
 rificed material is insufficient)
 owing to 16.♙f4!?, for example:
 16...♟d5 17.♙g3 ♞a5+ 18.♟f1 ♟c6
 19.♟g1±, or 16...♞f6 17.♙g3 ♞xb2
 18.♞xb2 ♙b2 19.♞b1± with ad-
 vantage to White in both varia-
 tions.

14.♟bxd6

The other possible capture
 14.♟cxd6 leads, after 14...♙xb5
 15.♟xb5 (but not 15.♙xb5 ♖e6
 16.♙f4 ♙xb2± and White's diffi-
 culties are piling up) 15...♞xd1+
 16.♙xd1 ♖xe4+ 17.♙e3 ♖e7!? 18.
 0–0 ♟d7!? 19.♙f3 ♖b8 20.♟xa7
 ♟e5 21.♙xc5 ♟d7 22.♖fd1 ♟bd3
 23.♙e3 ♖xb2 24.a4 ♟c4 25.♖ac1
 ♟xe3 26.♖c8+ ♙f8 27.fxe3 ♖xa7
 28.♖xd3 ♟g7=, to a position in
 which White has an extra pawn,
 but this is almost irrelevant.

14...♖e6



15.♙f4

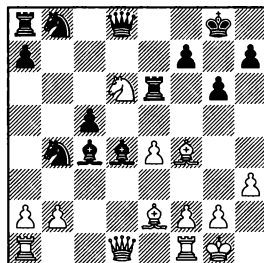
This is the only move which
 leads to independent positions.

For 15.a3 ♟d4c6 16.♞d5 ♙f8 17.
 ♙f4 ♟d4! – see 15.♙f4 ♙f8 16.a3?!

White should be in no hurry to
 play 15.0–0?!, since after 15...
 ♟8c6 (White has problems even
 after the simple move 15...
 ♖xd6!±) 16.a3 ♟c2! 17.♞xc2
 ♟d4± the activity of Black's pieces
 increases, Cebalo – A.Rotstein,
 Portoroz 1997.

15...♙f8

The attempt by Black to cut off
 White's queen from the protec-
 tion of the knight by 15...♙d4?!
 can be met with 16.0–0 and now
 16...♙xc4 fails to the spectacular
 move...

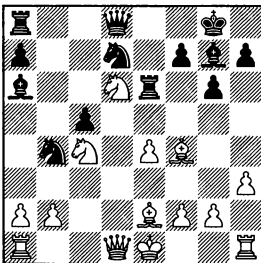


17.♟xf7! and White obtains a
 stable advantage by sacrificing
 his knight (instead, after 17.♟xc4
 ♖xe4 18.♙f3 ♖xf4 19.♙xa8 ♖xf2
 20.♖xf2 ♟d3 21.♞f3 ♟xf2 22.♟f1
 ♟d7 23.♖e1±, Black's compensa-
 tion for the exchange is insuffi-
 cient, Sapis – Ciemniak, Lubnie-
 wice 1994, but it might have been
 even stronger for White to play
 18.♙d6↑, with a strong initia-
 tive) 17...♟xf7 18.♙xc4 ♞e8 (even
 worse is 18...♞f6 19.♞f3 ♟8c6

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♜xb5 ♖e8 11. ♜d2 ♜xd5 12. ♜c4

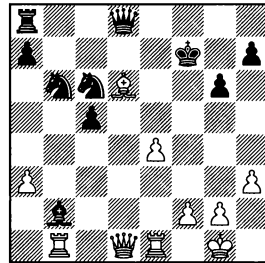
20. e5 ♙xe5 21. ♙xe6+ ♜xe6 22. ♜b3+ ♜d6 23. ♞ad1+ ♜c7 24. ♙xe5+ ♜xe5 25. ♜c3+-, with the threat of f4) 19. ♜b3 ♜d7. White maintains the advantage with 20. ♞fd1 ♜c6 21. ♜b7 ♜c8 22. ♙xe6+ ♜xe6 23. ♜b3+ ♜f6 24. ♞ac1 (with the idea of e5) or 20. ♞ad1 (with the threat of ♞xd4). White's pieces are very active, while Black's king is in a terrible position, so White has excellent compensation for the sacrificed material.

Black still has problems if he ignores the knight on d6 and simply continues his development with 15... ♜d7.

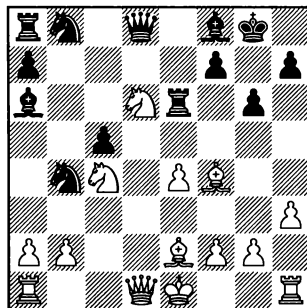


16. a3!N. It is important to include this move. White ousts the enemy knight from its active position (instead, if White castles immediately with 16. 0-0 then after 16... ♜e5 17. ♙xe5 ♙xe5 18. a3 Black can exploit the position of his knight on b4 by playing 18... ♞xd6 19. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 20. axb4 ♜xd1 21. ♙xd1 ♙xf1 22. ♜xf1 cxb4= Hillarp Persson – Gdanski, Goteborg 1997) 16... ♜c6 17. 0-0 ♜b6 18. ♞e1 ♙xc4 19. ♙xc4 ♞xd6 20. ♙xf7+

♜xf7 21. ♙xd6 ♙xb2 22. ♞b1



22... ♙c3 (22... ♙d4?! 23. e5 ♞c8 24. ♞e4+ White begins to exploit the bad position of Black's monarch) 23. ♞xb6 ♜xb6 (Black can win a piece, but only temporarily, with 23... axb6 24. ♜b3+ ♜e8 but after 25. ♞d1 ♙d4 26. ♞e6+ ♜e7 27. ♙xe7 White's bishop is taboo, since he is threatening ♜c6+, and after 27... ♜d7 28. ♜xd7+ ♜xd7 29. ♙f6 ♞xa3 30. ♙xd4 cxd4 31. ♞xd4+ Black must fight for a draw in a rook and pawn ending, a pawn down) 24. ♜f3+ ♜e6 25. ♜xc3 ♜xd6 26. ♜f6+ ♜c7 27. ♜f7+ ♜c8 28. ♜xh7+ (with ideas of ♜xg6 and e5-e6) and White has the better prospects in the ensuing struggle, thanks to the bad position of Black's king.

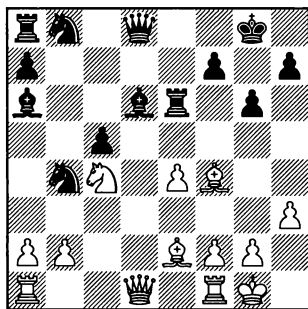


16.0-0

White's task is not at all easy after 16.a3?! ♖4c6 17.♖d5 ♖d4 18.♗xa8 ♖xe2 19.♙h2 ♙xd6 20.♖xd6 ♙xd6! 21.♙xd6 ♖xd6 22.♖d5 ♖b6 23.♙d1 ♖c6+ when Black will regain his pawn and have three minor pieces against two rooks.

16...♙xd6

Matters are less clear after 16...♖4c6!?∞, or 16...♖8c6 17.a3 ♖c2 18.♖xc2!? ♖xd4 19.♖d2 (19.♖xf7!? ♖f6 20.♙g5 ♖xc2 21.♙xf6 ♙xf6 22.♖g5!?) 19...♙d6 20.♙d3=

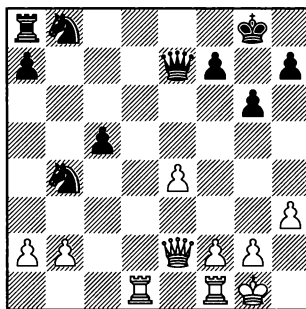


17.♖xd6 ♙xe2 18.♖xe2 ♙xd6 19.♙xd6 ♖xd6 20.♙ad1

Another interesting try here is 20.♙fd1!? ♖e7 21.♖b5 with the idea of 21...♖8c6 22.♙ac1±, but after 21...a6! 22.♖b6 (otherwise Black will complete his development with 22...♖d7, while now 22...♖d7? can be answered with 23.♖c7±, planning ♙d2 and ♙ad1+–) Black can play 22...♖8c6!? with the idea of trapping the enemy queen with ♙b8 (or 22...♖g7!? 23.a3 ♖4c6 24.♙ac1 ♖xe4∞ planning ♙a7, and after all

the queenside pawns disappear off the board, Black's extra piece should tell, while the long-range power of White's extra rook might well turn out to be irrelevant; this is a subtle point which even the best computer programs at the moment are incapable of grasping...!) 23.♙ac1 ♖xe4 24.♖xc5 ♙d8 25.♙xd8 ♖xd8 26.♖c4 ♖xc4 (26...♖b7!? 27.a3 ♖bc6 28.b4 ♖g7) 27.♙xc4 ♖bc6=

20...♖e7∞



Black's two knights might prove stronger than the rook, so White should not just sit back and wait. He has two possibilities: to attack the enemy c5-pawn and to advance his e- and f- pawns. He should try to open the position for his long-range pieces – the rooks and the queen – and exploit the clumsiness of Black's cavalry.

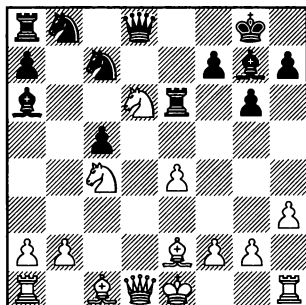
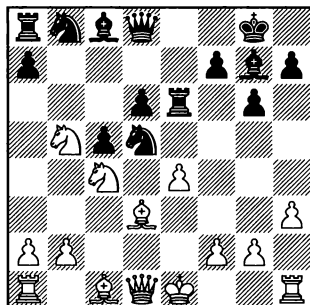
A2b) 12...♙e6!N

(diagram)

This move creates difficult problems for White to solve.

13.♙e2

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♗xb5 ♖e8 11. ♗d2 ♗xe4 12. ♕xe4



After 13. ♗bxd6 it is very good for Black to reply with 13... ♕a6! 14. 0-0 ♗b4, threatening ♖xd6, ♕xc4 or ♗xd3.

13... ♗b4 14. ♗bxd6

It is too risky for White to capture the other way – 14. ♗cxd6 ♕a6 15. a4 ♗c6!?, with the idea of ♗d4 (after 15... ♗xb5 16. ♗xb5 ♖e7 17. f3 ♖h4+ 18. ♗f1 ♗c6 Black increases his pressure; it might look as if White can draw by playing 17. ♗c3, for example in the variation 17... ♕xc3 18. bxc3 ♖e4 19. ♕e3 ♖xe3! 20. fxe3 ♖xe3 21. ♖d2 ♖g3+ 22. ♗f1 ♕b7 23. ♕c4 ♗d7! 24. ♕xf7! ♗g7 25. ♕d5 ♕xd5 26. ♖xd5 ♖f8+ 27. ♗g1 ♗e5 28. ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 29. ♗xf1 ♖e3! 30. ♖e6!=, he achieves this, but only by finding a series of only moves... 23... ♗c6! 24. ♖f2 ♖c7 25. ♖xc5 ♖e8∞ with the idea ♖e5↑) 16. ♗xf7 ♗xf7! (16... ♖xd1!?) 17. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 18. ♗xc7 ♖xe4 19. ♗xa6 ♗d4↑

14... ♕a6

(diagram)

15. ♕g4

White is forced to give up a pawn.

It is weaker to play 15. ♕f4 ♗c6

16. 0-0 ♖e7! (matters are much less clear after 16... ♗e8! 17. ♗xe8 ♖xe8 18. f3 ♖d8∞) 17. ♕g4 ♖d8 18. ♕xe6 ♗xe6 19. ♖g4 (White might come under a dangerous attack after 19. ♖a4 ♗xf4 20. ♖xa6 ♖g5→) 19... h5 20. ♖g3 h4 21. ♖g4 ♗xf4 22. ♖xf4 ♗e5 23. b3 ♗d3 24. ♖e3 ♖xd6 25. ♗xd6 ♕d4↑ and White's defence is very difficult.

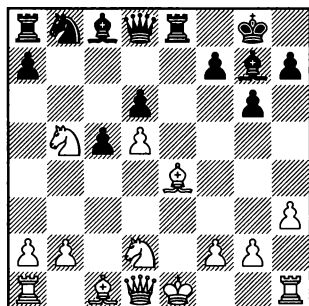
15... ♕xc4

It might be interesting for Black to try here 15... f5! 16. ♕f3 ♕xc4 17. ♗xc4 ♖xd1+ 18. ♗xd1 fxe4 19. ♕g4 ♖e8 20. ♗e1! (with the idea of ♕e3 and ♖d1). White's prospects are not inferior. He has ensured the safety of his king with his last move and has prevented 20... ♗c6? in view of the response 21. ♕d7±

16. ♗xc4 ♖xd1+ 17. ♕xd1 ♖xe4+ 18. ♕e2 ♗c6 19. ♕e3 ♗d4 and Black has good chances of equalising.

B) 11... ♗xe4 12. ♕xe4

The complications are in Black's favour after 12. ♗xe4 f5 13. 0-0 fxe4∞



12...a6!

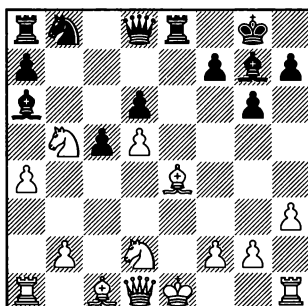
The alternatives are weaker.

It is disastrous for Black to play 12...b6? 13.b3 (another good continuation is 13.a4!?, with the plan of 0-0 and d4xd6, 13...a6 14.d3 f5 15.0-0 fxe4 16.d4 c7 17.f4+-, and Black cannot avoid material loss) 13...a6 14.a4+- with the decisive threat of d4c4, after first castling.

12...a6? 13.d3 (it is also good for White to play here 13.dxd6!? xxd6 14.0-0±, planning d4 and e1, and Black does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn) 13...f5 14.0-0 fxe4 15.dxe4 f5 16.e1± and White succeeds in consolidating his position, while preserving his extra pawn, Kuzmin – Taimanov, Rostov 1969.

After 12...f5?! 13.0-0 fxe4 14.d4±, the weakness of the d6-pawn guarantees a considerable advantage for White.

13.a4



13...a5!

This is the right move for Black! He continues to sacrifice material but White's monarch will be forced to remain in the centre. This is the essence of the variation chosen by Black.

13...f5?! 14.0-0 fxe4 15.d4±

14.dxd6

But not 14.0-0?! xxb5± and in a position with material equality Black's pieces are deployed much more actively.

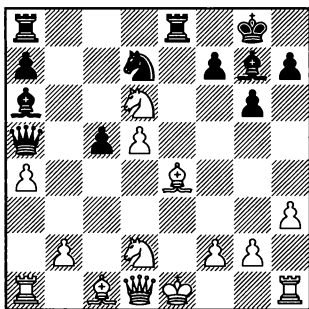
14...d7

Black loses after 14...d8? 15.dxf7! xf7 16.f3+ g8 17.d6+-. White has no problems at all. First he places his king on the comfortable d1-square, brings his rooks into play via the a3- and e1-squares. Black cannot avoid the material loss.

Black still has problems following 14...e7?! 15.f3 f5 (15...d7 16.d1 f5 17.d3! with the idea of answering 17...d5 with

9...b5 10. ♖xb5 ♖e8 11. ♖d2 ♖xe4 12. ♙xe4 ♙a6 13. a4 ♜a5 14. ♖xd6 ♖d7

18. ♖6c4+–; it is slightly weaker for White to play 17. ♖xf5 gxf5 18. ♜xf5± V.Lazarev – F.Handke, Biel 1997) 16. ♖xf5 gxf5 17. ♜xf5 ♖d7 18. ♖d1±. This is a very precise move. White's king escapes from the pin and frees the e1-square for his rook on h1, while the rook on a1 will quickly come action via the a3-square. In addition to all his positional pluses, White preserves his material advantage.



We shall now deal now with the moves **B1) 15.g4!?** and **B2) 15. ♜c2**.

Here the standard move 15.f3? (planning ♖f2) does not work: 15... ♙e5 16. ♖f2 (16. ♖xe8?? ♙g3#) 16... ♙xd6 (with the idea of c4). White will pay for his extra pawn with the loss of the game, since the dark squares in his camp are fatally weakened. He lags in development too and his pieces are in complete disarray. His position is beyond salvation and a possible continuation is 17. ♜e1 c4 18. ♖f1 ♖c5 19. ♙e3 ♖xe4+ 20. fxe4 ♜xe4

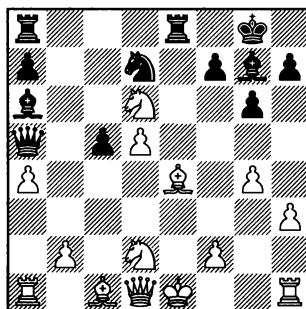
21. ♖d2 ♖e5 22. ♖f3 ♜xd5–+ Timoscenko – A.Shabalov, Barnaul 1988.

15. ♖xe8 ♜xe8 16.f3 (16. ♜c2 f5 – see 15. ♜c2 f5 16. ♖e8; 16. ♜f3? f5 17. ♖d1 fxe4 18. ♜f4 ♙d3± A.Ipatov – Zhrebukh, Lvov 2007) 16...f5 17. ♖f2? (17. ♜c2 is better – see 15. ♜c2 f5 16. ♖e8 ♖e8 17.f3) 17... ♙d4+ 18. ♖g3 ♖f6!↑, after 19. ♖h2 fxe4 20. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 21.fxe4 ♜xe4 22. ♙g1, it looks as though White should manage to save the game.

The active move 15. ♜a3?! is inferior on account of 15...f5, for example: 16. ♜c2 fxe4 17. ♖b5 ♙xb5 18. axb5 ♜xb5 19. ♜c4 ♜xc4 20. ♖xc4 ♖b6± and White's pawn weaknesses are looking vulnerable, G.Sargissian – A.Evdokimov, Yerevan 2004.

B1) 15.g4!?

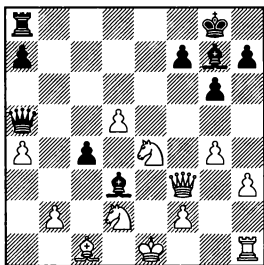
This is a double-edged move. Further tournament practice is required before a final evaluation can be made.



15... ♖f6!±N

Black has tried some other moves, but they are inferior.

15...♖e5 16.♖a3 ♜d3+!? (Slower continuations are disastrous for Black, e.g. 16...♗b4? 17.♗c2+ – and White parries his opponent's threats and keeps his extra material, Bleses – Tolnai, Kecskemet 1989.) 17.♗xd3 ♜xd3 18.♗f3 (18. f3 f5 is inferior, because the scope of Black's pieces is now even greater.) 18...♗xe4+ 19.♜6xe4 c4. Black preserves his important bishop and it remains like a bone in White's throat.



White fails to solve his problems with 20.♜d6, because after the simple reply 20...♗f8, he has to find another solution.

With 20.♗e3 White defends indirectly against the threat of ♗e8, but he reduces his protection of the important d5-pawn, so 20...♗xd5. Now after 21.f3 f5 (21...♜d4 does not achieve anything, since White's queen is indirectly protected after 22.♜b3!, with the idea of ♜bc5xd3. This quiet move helps White to deal with the rather unpleasant enemy bishop on d3, after which Black's material

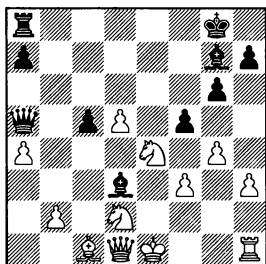
deficit should prove to be decisive: 22...♜g7 23.♜bc5+ – threatening ♜xd3) 22.gxf5 gxf5 23.♗g1 fxe4 24.♜xe4 ♜xe4 25.fxe4 ♗b7 26.♗d4 ♗e8 27.e5 (White's best move here is possibly the tricky 27.♜e3!? h6∞; the idea behind the trap can be seen in the variation 27...♜h8? 28.♗xg7!+–) 27...♜h8 28.♜f4 ♜f6!∞ – White's extra pawn is not important and his king is rather uncomfortable.

20.b3! White kills several birds with one stone – he undermines the strong enemy bishop and makes it possible to play the important move ♜d1. 20...♗e8 21.♜d1 ♜xe4 22.♜xe4 cxb3 23.♜g5! (It would be inferior for White to choose 23.♜d6, because after 23...♗e5 24.♗xf7+ ♜h8 25.♜c4 ♗xa4 26.♜b2 ♗xc4 27.♜xe5 ♗c2+ 28.♜e1 ♗e4+ 29.♜d2 ♗xe5 30.♗e6 ♗c3+ 31.♜e2 ♜d4 32.♗f7 h6 33.♜f1 b2 34.♜g2 ♗d2 35.h4±, he preserves his material advantage but will find it hard to realise it; in this line it is a mistake for White to play 25.♜e3?! V.Shishkin – S.Pavlov, Kiev 2008, owing to Black's simple reply 25...b2! 26.♜e2 ♗a6+, restoring the material balance and preserving all the pluses of his position.) 23...f6 24.♗xb3 fxf5 25.♜d2± (planning ♗e1) – White has ensured the safety of his king and will begin the realisation of his extra pawn.

The rook sacrifice 15...♗xe4+!? is interesting, but nothing more...

9...b5 10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. ♜d2 ♜xe4 12. ♙xe4 ♙a6 13. a4 ♜a5 14. ♜xd6 ♜d7

still, White must play accurately: 16. ♜6xe4 ♜e5 (16...♜e8? 17.f3 f5 18.♙f2± is too slow; or 17...♙d4 18.♜c2+– with the plan of ♙d1, ♜b3 and ♙d2, so Black does not obtain compensation for the sacrificed material.) 17.♙a3 ♜d3+ 18.♙xd3 ♙xd3 19.f3 f5

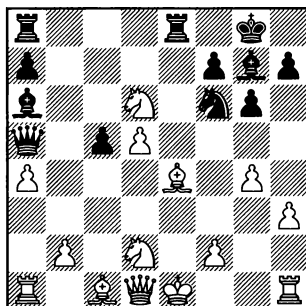


20.gxf5 (White has the better position after 20.♜c3!? ♙xc3 21.bxc3 ♜e8+ 22.♙f2 ♜d8 23.h4 ♜e2+ 24.♙g3 ♜e8 25.♜c4! ♙xc4 26.d6 ♜d7 27.g5 planning ♙f4 and h5+–) 20...gxf5 21.♜g3. This is a precise prophylactic move; White increases his protection of the e2-square. (Unclear positions arise after the active try 21.♜g5, Z.Kozul – D.Barlov, Kladovo 1989, 21...♜e8+ 22.♙f2 ♜d8 23.h4 ♜e2+ 24.♜xe2 ♙d4+ 25.♙e1 ♙xe2 26.♜e6 ♜xd5 27.♜f4 ♜a2∞ and despite White's material advantage he has problems to worry about.). 21...c4 22.♙f2 ♜xd5 23.♙g2 ♙h8 24.♙h2 ♙e5 25.♙g1 ♙g8 26.♜e1± – White keeps his extra piece and will gradually mobilise his forces.

(diagram)

16. ♜f3

After 16.f3 ♜ed8! Black regains



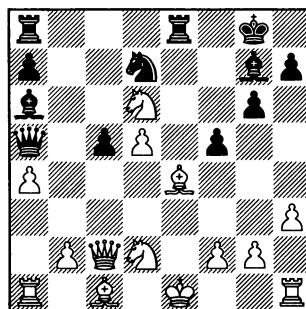
his piece and maintains the advantage.

16...♜e7!?

16...♜e5!? 17.♙d1 ♜d8 18.♜xf7 ♙xf7 19.♜e1 ♙g8 20.♙d3 ♜xe1 21.♙xe1 ♙b7 22.♙c4 with the plan of ♙f1 and ♙a1–a3–d3±

A possible continuation is 17.g5 ♜xd5 (17...♜e4!?) 18. ♜b5!? preparing to castle. Now Black does not win the exchange with 18...♙xb5 19.♙xb5 ♜xa1, since after 20.0–0 he has to give it back. 20...♜xe4 21.♜xe4± with the idea of ♜e4–f6.

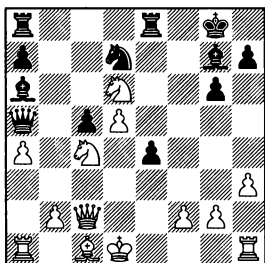
B2) 15. ♜c2 f5



16. ♜xe8

White must capture the rook, since it is already too late to have second thoughts.

16.♔d1? fxe4 17.♘c4 (White should not allow ♔d3: 17.♘xe8 ♔d3+)

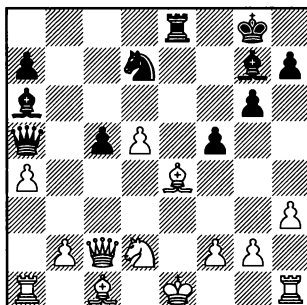


17...♔xc4! Black is understandably reluctant to part with his important bishop, because the fate of his attack depends on it (after 17...♗d8!? 18.♘xe8 ♗xe8 19.♔d2 ♗f7 20.♘d6 ♗xd5! 21.♗xe4 ♗b3+ 22.♗c2 ♗d5 23.♗e4 the game ends in a repetition of moves; rather unclear positions arise after 19...♘e5!?; White has problems after 19.♗e1 ♗f7↑, 19. ♗a3?! ♗f7 20.♘d2 ♘f6→, or 19. ♘d6 ♗e5 20.♘b5 ♗xd5+ 21.♔e2 ♗f8→) 18.♘xc4 (he fails to solve his problems with 18.♗xc4 ♗e5+ with the idea of ♘b6) 18...♗a6+ White's extra unprotected pawn is of no importance, whereas his king is in serious danger, Vilela de Acuna – N.Ristic, Bela Crkva 1989.

16...♗xc4

(diagram)

17.♔d1



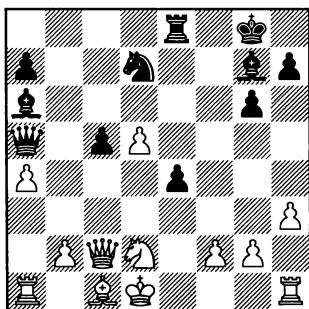
17.f3!? N White is trying to preserve his material advantage and this line is of some interest. 17... fxe4 18.fxe4 ♘e5 19.♗a3 ♘c4 20. ♗f3 (Black has chances of equalising in the endgame arising after 20.♗c3 ♔xc3 21.♗xc3 ♗xc3 22. bxc3 ♘xd2 23.♔xd2 ♗xe4, or 20. ♗g3 ♔h6 21.♗c3 ♔f4 22.♗f3 ♗xc3 23.bxc3 ♘xd2 24.♔xd2 ♗xe4+) 20...♔h6 21.♗c3 (21.♔d1!? ♘xd2 22.♔xd2 ♔xd2 23.♗xd2 ♗xa4 24. b3 ♗a1+ 25.♗c1 ♗d4 26.♔c2 ♗e4 27.♗e1 ♔e2 28.♗c3±) 21...♗xc3 22.bxc3 ♘xd2 23.♔xd2 ♗xe4+ 24.♔d1 ♔e2+ 25.♔c2 ♔xd2 26. ♔xd2 ♔xf3 27.gxf3 ♗xa4. The ensuing rook and pawn ending is better for White, but it looks as though it should end in a draw in any case. 28.♗e1 (28.♗b1 ♔f7 29. ♗b7+ ♔f6 30.♗xh7 ♔e5=) 28... ♔f7 29.♔d3 ♗f4=

After 17.f3 Black can try the immediate 17...♘e5!?, but White is not obliged to respond with 18. ♗a3 and can instead play 18.♔d1, intending after 18...fxe4 to recapture not with the pawn but with

9...b5 10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. ♜d2 ♜xe4 12. ♙xe4 ♙a6 13. a4 ♚a5 14. ♜xd6 ♜d7

his knight. 19. ♜xe4 ♚d8 (after 19...♜d3 20. ♙d2 ♚d8 21. ♙c3 ♚xd5 22. ♙xg7 ♜xb2+ 23. ♜c1 ♜d3+ 24. ♜b1 ♜xg7 25. ♚c3±, planning ♙a2, Black gains no compensation for the sacrificed exchange) 20. d6 ♜d3 21. ♙a3 ♙xe4 22. fxe4 ♚xd6 23. ♙e3 ♜xb2+ (it is bad for Black to try to regain his material immediately with 23... ♜f2+ 24. ♜c1 ♜xh1 25. ♚xc5± with ideas of ♙b3, or eventually ♚d5 or ♙d4, and Black's knight remains stranded on h1) 24. ♜c1 c4 25. ♙c3 ♜d3+ 26. ♙xd3 cxd3 27. ♚c5 d2+ (Black has to fight for a draw in a very difficult endgame after 27... ♚xc5+ 28. ♙xc5 ♙h6+ 29. ♜b2 ♙b7 30. ♙b4 ♙xe4 31. ♙d1±) 28. ♜d1 ♚b8 29. ♚c2± – although Black has lost some material he still has chances for a favourable outcome of the game.

17...fxe4

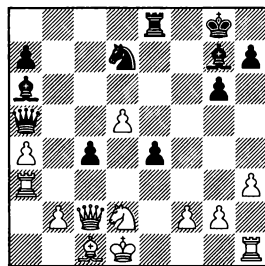


18. ♜xe4

It is too risky for White to play 18. ♙a3?!, hoping for the variation 18...♙d3?! 19. ♙xd3 exd3 20. ♚xd3

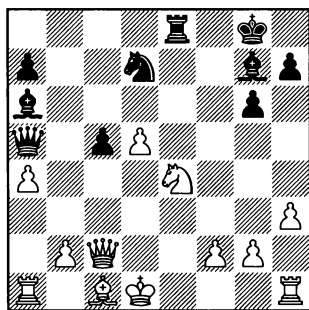
♚xa4+ 21. b3± and all his difficulties are over, for example: 21... ♜e5 (the retreat of the queen is inferior: 21...♚d4 22. ♚xd4 ♙xd4 23. ♙e1± – Black will have to fight long and hard for a draw, or 21... ♚a1 22. d6 ♜h8 23. f4!± White denies the e5-square to Black's pieces and plans to start a pawn storm on the kingside) 22. ♚xg6!± Black loses material for nothing.

Instead Black should play 18... c4! An excellent move!



19. ♙e3 (Black still exerts pressure after 19. ♙e1 ♚xd5±; 19. ♜xe4? also fails to 19...♚xd5+ 20. ♚d2 ♚xe4 21. ♙e3 ♚a8+ and although the material is approximately equal Black retains a strong initiative; and finally if 19. ♜xc4?! ♚xd5+ 20. ♜d2 ♜c5+, when the black pieces dominate the board and this more than compensates the sacrificed material) 19...♚xd5! 20. ♙xe4 ♙f8 (it is also possible for Black to play 20...♙d8!? 21. ♙he1 c3 22. bxc3? ♙d3+; 22. ♙e8+ ♙xe8 23. ♙xe8+ ♜f7 24. ♙e4 ♚xe4 25. ♙xe4 cxd2 26. ♙xd2 ♙xb2 27. ♙e3 ♙f1+ and White has the difficult task of

fighting for the draw; his defence might be a bit easier after 25... cxb2 26. ♖xb2 ♖xb2 27. ♔c4 ♔c5) 21.f3 (White has problems after the alternatives: 21. ♖he1 ♔c5 22. ♖e7 ♖f6 23. ♖xa7 c3, or 21. ♖e7!? ♔c5!) 21... ♔c5 22. ♖e7 ♖f6! 23. ♖xa7 c3 24. ♖xa6 (White's position is very difficult after 24.bxc3 ♖c4 25. ♖a5 ♖d8--+) 24... cxd2+ and White will find it difficult to survive in the endgame, Van Wely – Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1998.



We shall now analyse the moves **B2a) 18... ♖b4** and **B2b) 18... c4!**

Black's unfortunate attempt to regain the pawn with the move 18... ♖e5?! can be punished, not by 19. ♖d2 ♖xd5 20. ♔c1 ♖d8!?∞ with the idea of ♔e5, but by the simple response 19. ♔c3 ♖b4 (no better is 19... ♔b6 20.f4! ♖e2+ 21. ♔xe2 ♖xd5+ 22. ♖d2 ♔c4 23. ♔e1 ♔xd2 24. ♖d1 ♔e4+ 25. ♔f1 ♔d2+ 26. ♔g1± when White has no problems and keeps the extra material; it is disastrous for Black to play 20... ♖e8 21. ♖d2 ♔c4 22. ♔b5!

♔e3+ 23. ♖xe3 and whether Black plays 23... ♖xb5 24. ♖a3+- or 23... ♖xe3 24. ♖d2+- the game can hardly be saved) 20.f4 ♖e8 21. ♔b5+- and Black has no compensation for his material deficit.

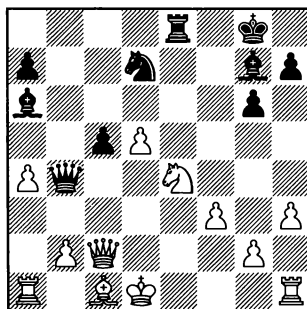
B2a) 18... ♖b4

This is played with the idea of opening the d-file after the manoeuvre ♖b7xd5. It is a bit too slow however, so White gains time to mobilise his forces.

19.f3!

This move is simple and strong, because the knight is very active on e4, so White has no need to move it from there.

The alternatives are clearly worse: 19. ♖e1?? ♖d4+ 20. ♔d2 ♖xe1+ 21. ♔xe1 ♖d3+- with decisive threats on the e-file, or 19. ♔c3?! ♔e5 and White's defence will not be easy.



19... ♖e5

Black will have problems if he chooses anything else.

After 19... ♖b7 20. ♖a3 ♖xd5+

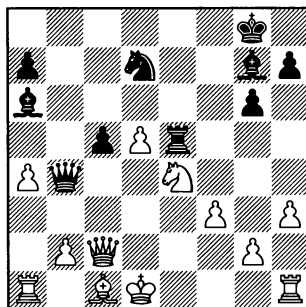
9...b5 10. ♖xb5 ♖e8 11. ♖d2 ♖xe4 12. ♖xe4 ♖a6 13. a4 ♖a5 14. ♖xd6 ♖d7

21. ♖d2 ♖d4 22. ♖e1±, with the idea of ♖c2-b1, the slowness of Black's 18... ♖b4, might easily become the cause of his demise.

If 19... ♖d4+ 20. ♖d2 ♖d3 21. ♖a3. Another plus of White's 19th move, in contrast to the weaker 19. ♖c3, is that his rook can take an active part in the defence from the a3-square. 21...c4 22. ♖e1 ♖b8 (it is too slow for Black to try 22... ♖e5?! 23. ♖f2 ♖xd5 24. ♖xd3 cxd3 25. ♖e3+— and White's material advantage will be decisive, or 22... ♖xd5 23. ♖f2! ♖xe1+ 24. ♖xe1 ♖c5 25. ♖e3 ♖c6 26. ♖xd3 ♖xd3+ 27. ♖f1 ♖e5 28. ♖e2± — it is hard to believe that Black has any drawing chances, since his attack has come to a dead end and his material deficit will become more and more important with every move) 23. d6+— (with the idea of ♖e3 and ♖f2) and it is now Black's turn to worry about his opponent's threats.

19... ♖e5 20. ♖d2 ♖d4 21. ♖xc5 ♖xb2 22. ♖c3 ♖b8! The position is still unclear, but White has grabbed material and can rely on maintaining the advantage; (after 22... ♖b6 23. ♖b4 ♖xb4 24. ♖xb4 ♖xf3 White has a practical solution in 25. ♖c3!?± when Black cannot avoid exchanges and his material deficit is bound to tell; if 23... ♖d8 24. ♖d6±) 23. ♖b4 ♖a8. Black has found a way to avoid the exchange of queens, but this is still insufficient for equality. 24.

d6! ♖d5 25. ♖a3 ♖d3 26. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 27. ♖e1 ♖d8 28. ♖e3 ♖xe4 29. ♖xe4 ♖xd6 30. ♖c4±; after the exchange of queens White's hands will be freed to realize his extra pawn.



20. ♖d2!?

20. ♖a3!? ♖xd5 21. ♖d2±

White does not achieve much with 20. ♖c3 ♖d4+ 21. ♖d2 ♖d3 (with ideas of ♖e8, c4 and ♖e5, or ♖e8, c4 and ♖c5-b3—) 22. ♖e1 ♖h6 (Black can draw even after the far from obvious solution 22... ♖xe1+ 23. ♖xe1 ♖c4+ 24. ♖d2 ♖b3+ 25. ♖c1 ♖d3 26. ♖e4 ♖f1+ 27. ♖e1 ♖h6 28. ♖b1 ♖d2 and it is White who much keep checking: 29. ♖e6=) 23. f4. There is no other move. 23... ♖xf4 24. ♖xf4 ♖e2!= (with the idea of ♖d3), draw, Lokotar – Marin, Vosu 1989.

It is rather dubious for White to play 20. ♖d2 ♖b3+ 21. ♖e1 ♖xd5 22. ♖a3 ♖xd2 (22... ♖b7∞) 23. ♖xb3 ♖xg2, with the idea of ♖d4, ♖e5— and the complications are clearly advantageous for Black.

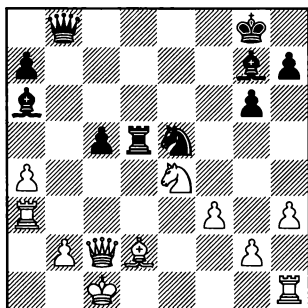
20...♞xd5

White has no problems whatsoever after 20...♞d4 21.♞a3 ♞xd5 22.♞c3+—

21.♞c1 ♞b8

White's defence is much easier after the exchange of the queens, 21...♞d4 22.♞c3+— since, as can be expected, the exchanges are favourable for the defending side.

22.♞a3 ♞e5



23.♞xc5!

This is simple and strong.

It is slightly weaker for White to play 23.♞b3 ♞f8 (23...♞c7 24.♞b1 ♞c6 25.♞c1 ♞d4 26.♞e3±, or 26.♞a3±) 24.♞b1± Lokotar – Maidla, Tallinn 1991.

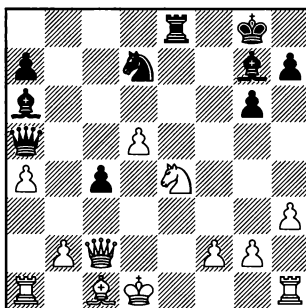
23...♞xc5 24.♞xc5 ♞d3+ 25.♞xd3 ♞xb2 26.♞d1+—

B2b) 18...c4!

This accurate move enhances Black's attack.

(diagram)

White now has the choice between the sharp move **B2b1) 19.f3** and the more reliable **B2b2) 19.♞c3**.



B2b1) 19.f3

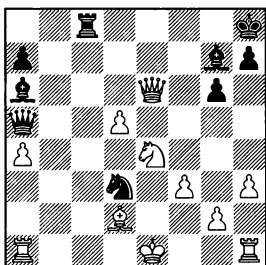
We can recommend this move to fans of sharp complications.

19...♞e5!

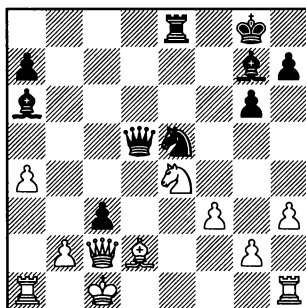
Black's pressure diminishes after 19...♞xd5+ 20.♞d2 ♞b7 21.♞a3! ♞e5 22.♞c2 ♞d5 23.♞f4±, with the idea of ♞b1 and ♞d1, and he will have difficulty finding a way to continue the attack.

Black is down an exchange and two pawns and he can even sacrifice another pawn, “burning all the bridges” to open even more files for an attack against White's king: 19...c3!? 20.♞xc3 ♞c5 (the following variations are not in Black's favour: 20...♞xc3 21.♞xc3 ♞xd5+ 22.♞d2 ♞c8 23.♞e3 ♞e5 24.♞c1±, or 22...♞e2+ 23.♞c1 ♞a6 24.♞e1 ♞c8 25.♞xc8+ ♞xc8 26.♞e8+ ♞f7 27.♞xc8 ♞c5 28.♞c7+ ♞e6 29.♞a3± and in both cases, White manages to parry his opponent's attack and retain his material advantage) 21.♞e4 ♞d3 22.♞c6 ♞c8 23.♞e6+ ♞h8 24.♞d2 ♞xb2+ 25.♞e1 ♞d3+—

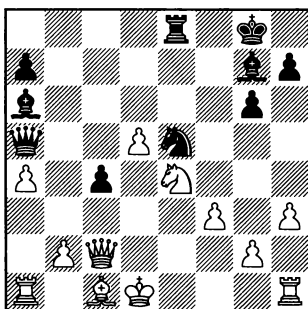
9...b5 10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. ♜d2 ♜xe4 12. ♙xe4 ♙a6 13. a4 ♚a5 14. ♜xd6 ♜d7



gradually ebbs away: 22. ♖b1
♜xb2 23. ♙c3±



26. ♖e2!? (Black has good drawing chances after 26. ♖f1 ♜c5+ 27. ♖g1 ♚xd2 28. ♚xc8+ ♙xc8 29. ♜xd2 ♙xa1 with a complicated, dynamically balanced endgame; a possible continuation is 30. ♖h2!?, 30. g3 ♜xa4 31. ♖g2 ♙d4 32. ♜b3 ♙b6 33. ♜e1 ♖g7 34. ♜e4 ♜b2 35. ♜e8 ♙f5 with probable equality.) 26... ♜c5+ 27. ♜d1 ♚d8 28. ♜xc5 ♜xc5 29. ♚xa6 ♙xa1 30. ♖e2 ♜xd5 31. ♙e3±; White's king has been evacuated to the kingside and Black will have to fight hard for the draw.



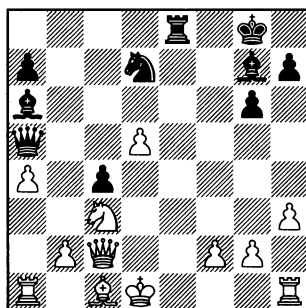
20. ♙d2 ♚xd5 21. ♖c1 c3!?

Now, in comparison with 19... c3!?, Black's pieces are much better prepared for the attack.

After 21... ♜d3+?!, the attack

Now after 22. ♙xc3 ♙d3 23. ♜d1 ♙h6+ 24. ♙d2 ♙xc2 25. ♜f6+ ♖f7 26. ♜xd5 ♙xd1 27. ♙xh6 ♙b3 28. ♜c3 ♜xf3 29. ♙d2 ♜d4 30. ♜b5 ♜c2 31. ♜d6+ ♖e7 32. ♜xe8 ♜xa1=, the position becomes completely equal.

B2b2) 19. ♜c3



This is a safer move, but still insufficient for an advantage.

19... ♙xc3

Black only reduces his own pressure with 19... ♜c5?! 20. ♜e1 ♜f8 21. ♜e7±, since White gradually consolidates his position.

20. ♖xc3

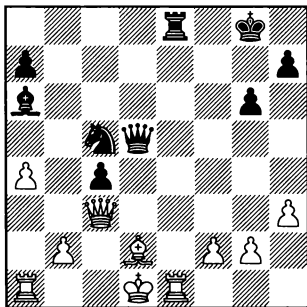
White comes under very unpleasant pressure after 20. bxc3?! ♖xd5+ 21. ♖d2 ♖xg2 22. ♜e1 ♖f3+ 23. ♔c2 ♚e5 (23... ♖f5+ 24. ♔d1 ♖f3=) 24. ♖d4 ♖f5+ 25. ♔d1 ♜e7!?↑, and Black could have made a draw here, if he so wished, with 25... ♖h5+ 26. ♔c2 ♖f5=

20... ♖xd5+ 21. ♔d2

After 21. ♖d2?? ♖xg2 White loses material, since 22. ♜e1? fails to 22... ♖f3+ 23. ♔c2 ♜xe1 24. ♖xe1 ♖d3#

21... ♚c5

The careless 21... ♖xg2?! 22. ♜e1 ♜xe1+ 23. ♔xe1 ♚c5 24. b4!± allows White to consolidate his defence while preserving the extra material.

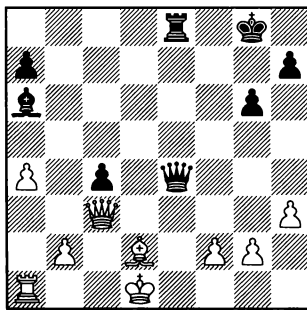
22. ♜e1**22... ♚e4!**

White would be very happy after the exchanging operation 22... ♜xe1+ 23. ♔xe1 ♖xg2 24. ♔h6!±, because he gradually mobilizes his forces and Black's initiative evaporates: 24... ♚d3+ (24... ♖h1+ 25. ♔e2 ♖e4+ 26. ♔e3±) 25. ♔d1 ♖f1+ (his initiative also disap-

pears after 25... ♖f3+?! 26. ♔c2 ♖e2+ 27. ♔b1 ♖d1+ 28. ♔c1±, or 25... ♚xf2+ 26. ♔c1 ♚d3+ 27. ♔b1 ♖b7 28. ♜a3!?±, or 28. a5±) 26. ♔c2 ♚b4+ 27. ♖xb4 ♖d3+ 28. ♔c1 ♖f1+ 29. ♔c2 ♖d3+ 30. ♔c1 ♖f1+ 31. ♔d2 ♖xf2+ 32. ♔d1 ♖f3+ 33. ♔e1 ♖g3+ 34. ♔e2 ♖g2+ 35. ♔e3 ♖xh3+ 36. ♔d4 ♖xh6 37. ♖b8+ ♖f8 38. ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 39. ♔e5 ♔e7 40. ♔d1+–; the endgame is winning for White, Vescovi – Jobava, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

23. ♜xe4

This is White's only move; everything else loses. For example: 23. ♖e3 enables Black to make his dreams come true – he can weave a mating net around White's king with 23... c3 24. bxc3 ♖b3+ 25. ♔c1 ♜b8.

23... ♖xe4**24. ♖f3**

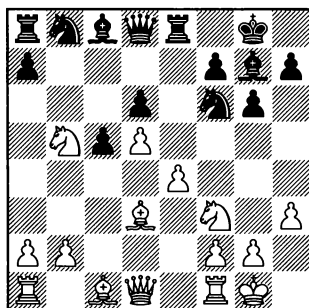
24. f3 ♖e2+ 25. ♔c2 ♖xg2=

There are also mating nets around White's king after 24. ♖g3?? c3! 25. bxc3 ♔c4–+

24... ♖xf3+!? 25. gxf3 ♔b7=; White has an extra pawn, but he is unlikely to be able to exploit it.

Chapter 14

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5
5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3
0–0 9.♘f3 b5 10.♘xb5 ♞e8 11.0–0



This is White's main move and probably the most precise.

11...♘xe4 12.♞e1

This is best. The alternatives are all inferior.

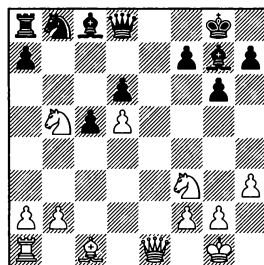
However, the apparently simple but very insidious move

12.♙xe4 requires a very precise response from Black. 12...♞xe4 13.♞e1 (Black can solve his problems after 13.♙g5 ♜b6 14.♘c3 ♞e8 15.♞e1 ♞xe1+ 16.♜xe1 ♘d7=, since it is not at all clear how White can improve his position) 13...♞xe1+ 14.♜xe1

(diagram)

and now:

The dangers facing Black are best illustrated by the variation



14...a6? 15.♘c7! ♞a7, S.Stoisavljevic – S.Jovanovic, Igalo 1994, 16.♙g5! f6 17.♘e6↑, with the threat of ♘xg7, as well as the standard plan of ♙f4, ♘d2–c4, b2–b4 and White increases the pressure in the centre, maintaining a considerable space advantage. Black has problems with the development of his queenside and a weak pawn on d6 to worry about.

The quiet move 14...♙b7 is playable, for example 15.♙f4 ♙xd5?! 16.♞d1↑ and Black's lag in development is a real problem for him: 16...♙xf3 17.♞xd6 ♘d7 (17...♜c8 18.gxf3 fails to solve Black's problems – he is worse after 18...♘c6 19.♜e4 ♘d4 20.♘xd4 cxd4 21.♙g2± with ideas of ♙e5, ♜d5, ♞d7, b4–b5 and a4, leaving Black facing a difficult struggle for a

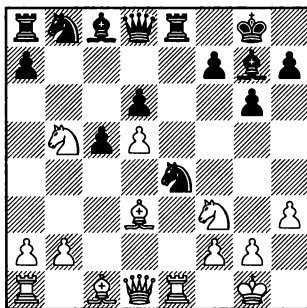
draw, or 18...♖d7 19.♞e7 ♘f8 20. ♘c7 ♜b8 21.♘d5 ♞xh3 22.♘f6+ ♙xf6 23.♞xf6 ♞d7 24.♞xf7 ♞xe7 25.♞xe7± with a very bad end-game for Black) 18.♞d2± ♞b8 19. ♞xd7 ♞xb5 20.♞d8+ ♙f8 (20... ♞xd8? 21.♞xd8+ ♙f8 22.♙h6+–) 21.gxf3 (planning ♙h6) 21...♞xd8 22.♞d8 ♞b6 23.♞xb6 axb6 24. a4!± with the idea of ♙c7xb6. But Black obtains an acceptable position with 15...♘d7! 16.♞d1 ♘b6 17.♘xd6 ♙xd5 18.♘b5 ♞f6 19.♙e5 ♞c6=

14...♙a6!? 15.♙g5 ♞d7 16.♘c3 (here 16.♘c7?? fails to 16...♞xc7 17.♞e8+ ♙f8 18.♞e1 – threatening ♞f8 – 18...♞c8 19.♙h6 ♘d7+ and Black succeeds in protecting his back rank) 16...♙b7 (here the careless 16...♙d3? is answered with 17.♞d2±, planning ♞e1) 17. ♞d2 ♘a6 18.♞e1 ♞e8= and White's space advantage is merely symbolic.

It is rather slow for White to play 12.♞b3 a6 and here Black gains active play after 13.♘a3 (better is the natural 13.♘c3 ♙f5=) 13...♘d7 14.♘c4 ♜b8 (Black does not need to protect his d6-pawn yet with 14...♘df6 15.♞e1 ♞a7 16.♞b6 ♞xb6 17.♘xb6 ♙f5 18. a4, Epishin – M.Nepomniashchy, St.Petersburg 1996, 18...♘d2!N 19.♞xe8+ ♘xe8 20.♙xf5 ♘xf3+ 21.gxf3 gxf5=) 15.♞c2 f5± and he has solved his development problems while preserving the advantages of his position (the pressure along the b-file and the h8-a1 di-

agonal), Karpov – Kamsky, Elista 1996.

White fails to create problems for his opponent with 12.♞a4 a6 (matters are much less clear after 12...♙d7 13.♞b3 ♙xb5 14.♙xb5 ♘d7 15.♞c2∞, but the following variations are better for Black: 13.♞e1 a6∞, or 13.♙xe4 ♙xb5 14. ♞xb5 ♞xe4± and the ensuing complications are in Black's favour, Z.Franco – E.Otero, Cienfuegos 1991) 13.♙xe4 ♙d7 14.♙d3 ♞b6= and Black regains the piece with an excellent position.



After 12.♞e1, we shall focus our analysis on the moves **A) 12... ♘f6** and **B) 12...a6**.

The alternatives fail to create any problems for White in consolidating his space advantage.

The weakening of the e6-square might prove to be fatal for Black after 12...f5? 13.♙xe4 ♞xe4 (he fails to hold on to his e4-pawn after 13...fxe4 14.♘g5+– V.Lazarev – Salama, Reykjavik 2008)

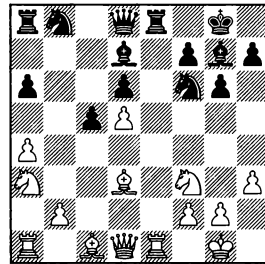
9.♟f3 b5 10.♞xb5 ♖e8 11.0-0 ♞xe4 12.♖e1

14.♞g5 ♖xe1+ 15.♞xe1 a6? (relatively best here is 15...♙e5, but after 16.f4 ♙f6 17.♞e6 ♞d7 18.♞bc7 ♙b7 19.♙d2 ♞a6 20.♞xa8 ♙xa8 21.♙c3±, Black's compensation for the exchange is insufficient) 16.♞e6!+- Kerek – Pila Diez, San Agustin 1998.

With the active move 12...♙a6?! Black merely creates problems for himself since with 13.♞a4! White applies great pressure on his opponent's queenside, because for Black to part with his light-squared bishop with ♙xb5 would in principle be equal to strategic capitulation, in view of the fatal weakening of the light squares. After 13...♞f6 14.♙g5 ♞d7? (14...♞b6 15.♙xf6 ♖xe1+ 16.♖xe1 ♙xf6 17.♖e8+ ♟g7 18.♞c7 ♙xd3, Saldano Dayer – P.Espada, Buenos Aires 1992, 19.♖c8! – White frees the e8-square for his queen or knight – 19...g5 20.♞e8+ ♟g6 21.♞xf6 ♟xf6 22.♞e8 ♙g6 23.g4!+- putting Black almost in zugzwang with his king in great danger, for example: 23...a5 24.♞h8+ ♟e7 25.♞f8+ ♟f6 26.♖e8 with the threat of checkmate with ♞h8; if 14...♖f8 15.♙ad1 ♞b6 16.♙f1 ♞bd7 17.♙f4± Black loses his d6-pawn, Murdzia – A.Wojtkiewicz, Lubniewice 1993, and possibly White has an even stronger move in the active 16.♙c4!?± planning ♙f4 and intending to answer 16...♞bd7? with the tactical shot 17.♞xd6!+-) 15.♙xf6 (The abstruse move 15.♞a5?!, Stryjecki

– Bu Xiangzhi, Athens 2001, is too slow.) 15...♙xf6 16.♖xe8+ ♞xe8 17.♖e1 ♞d7 18.♞f4 ♙e7 19.♞g5! ♙xg5 (19...♙d8 20.♞xd6 ♙xg5 21.♞xg5 ♞xd6 22.♖e8+ ♟g7 23.♙xa6 ♞a6 24.♞e7+-) 20.♞xg5 ♙xb5 21.♙xb5 ♞xb5 22.♞d8+ ♟g7 23.♖e8+-

The move 12...♙d7, indirectly protecting his knight on e4, is quite interesting. 13.a4 (the untried move 13.♙f4!? deserves attention and leads to complex but still advantageous positions) 13...a6 (after 13...♙xb5 14.♙b5 ♞d7 15.♖a3!, with the idea of ♖ae3, White's initiative is based on his two strong bishops and extra space) 14.♞a3 ♞f6

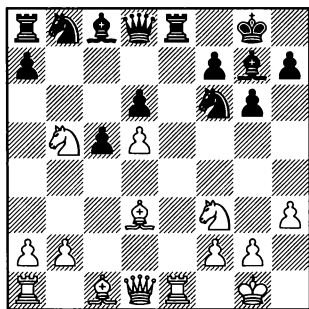


15.♞c4!? (White also gains a stable advantage with 15.♖xe8+ ♙xe8 16.♞c4 ♞c7 17.♙f4±) 15...♖xe1+ 16.♞xe1. White keeps control of the d5-square with his queen (He can also recapture with the queen: 16.♞xe1 ♞xd5 17.♙g5!?± and the ensuing complications are clearly in White's favour, owing to the lagging development of Black's queenside) 16...♙c8 (Black fails to solve his problems

Chapter 14

with 16...♖a7 17.♙e2±, intending to transfer the bishop to the f3-square; 17.♜f3?! ♙c8 18.♜c2 ♙b7 19.♙g5 h6 20.♙xf6 ♙xf6∞ J.Horvath – Dinstuhl, Budapest 1994) 17.♙f4 ♙f8 18.♙e2± and White preserves all the advantages of his position, with enduring positional pressure and a considerable space advantage.

A) 12...♜f6



This move is undoubtedly playable but it is less principled than Black's main continuation 12...a6, because now if White's knight on b5 is attacked it can retreat to the c3-square, securely protecting the d5-pawn, after which his extra space will guarantee a slight but stable advantage.

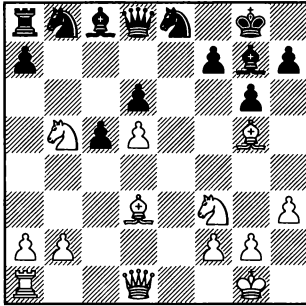
13.♙xe8+

If White does not exchange the rooks Black will do so himself advantageously, for example: 13. ♙f4 ♖xe1+ 14.♜xe1 (he cannot

gain much by recapturing with 14.♜xe1, since after the prophylactic 14...♙f8!?!∞, with the plan of ♙b7, a6 and ♜bd7-b6xd5 he solves all his opening problems) and it is easy to understand that White's knight was much better placed on f3. 14...♙f8 (14...♜e8!?! is also playable and, in addition to the ideas mentioned in the notes to the previous move, Black's dark-squared bishop exerts strong pressure on the long diagonal. It might also be interesting to investigate the complications arising after 14...♜h5!? 15.♙h2 ♙xb2 16.♖b1 ♙e5 17.♙xe5 dxe5 18. d6 ♜d7∞ and White has an initiative for the pawn, but on the other hand Black can try to transform White's pride and joy – his d6-pawn – from a strength into a weakness; the analysis of such positions will help readers to improve their general strategic understanding; they will become better players and will grasp the intricacies of complicated variations much more easily) 15.♜c2 ♜xd5! Black should not postpone this capture (the line: 15...a6?! 16.♜c3 ♜bd7 17.♜e3± enables White to strengthen his d5-pawn and consolidate his space advantage, Krasenkow – M.Mrdja, Asti 1996.) 16.♙g3 (the complications are in Black's favour after 16.♙e4 ♜xf4 17.♙xa8 ♜g5∞) 16...♙b7 17. ♙e4 ♜d7= and in this position White cannot avoid numerous exchanges.

13...♜xe8 14.♙g5!

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♖xb5 ♖e8 11. 0-0 ♖xe4 12. ♖e1



14...♖f6

Black also has problems after the alternatives.

14...♞d7?! This is a bad decision; he needs the d7-square for his minor pieces. 15. ♞d2. White prepares to seize the e-file with his rook. 15...♙b7 16. ♖e1 ♖f6 17. ♙xf6 (the slower line 17. ♙c4 a6 18. ♖c3 ♞c7 19. ♞f4 ♖h5 20. ♖e8+ ♙f8 21. ♞h4 ♖d7 22. ♙d8 ♞c8 23. ♖e4+- also leads to a decisive advantage for White, Kiriakov – M. Pavlovic, Papanastasio 1996; 19...♖bd7 20. ♖e7+-) 17...♙xf6 18. ♞f4 ♙e7 19. ♖g5 ♙xd5 20. ♖c3 ♙xg5 (20...h6 21. ♖d5! ♙xg5 22. ♞g3+-) 21. ♞xg5 ♙e6 22. ♖e4+-.

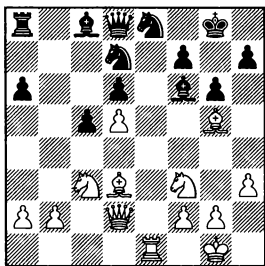
The weakness of the dark squares on the kingside and the lack of development of his queenside are fatal to Black. It is futile to play 15...♙a6 (instead of 15...♙b7) 16. a4 (stronger is 16. ♖e1!?, with the idea of 16...♙xb5 17. ♖e7±) 16... ♞c8 (16...♞b7 17. ♖e1 ♖d7 18. ♙f1± is no better) 17. ♖e1 ♖d7 18. b3± (18. ♞a5!?) White's positional advantage is increasing, based on seizing more space. The game

P. Wells – Gormally, Portsmouth 2006, continued 18...♖b6? (18... ♙b7 19. ♙c4 ♖b6 20. ♙h6↑) 19. ♖e7! ♙b7 20. ♞f4 ♙xd5 21. ♙e4+-

It is too optimistic for Black to play 14...♞b6?! because of 15. ♞e2!N. White exploits the fact that Black's queen no longer protects the bank rank (in the game Gelfand – Andreikin, Moscow 2010, White was quite successful with the routine move 15. ♞d2 and after 15...♙d7?! 16. ♖c3 ♖a6 17. ♖e1 ♖b4 18. ♙c4± he maintained the advantage, based on his extra space and superior development; however, Black could have played 15...♖d7! 16. ♖e1 ♙b7 17. ♖c3 ♖b8∞, solving his main problem – the development of his queen-side) 15...♙d7. He is forced to place his bishop on the inferior d7-square, which is usually needed for the b8-knight in such positions. 16. ♖c3 ♖c7 (Black still has problems after 16...h6 17. ♙f4 a5 18. ♖e1 ♖a6 19. ♞e7!±) 17. ♖e1 ♖ba6 18. ♞e7± – Black has great difficulties coordinating his pieces and maintaining the material balance since the drawback of his 14th move persists: his bank rank is weak, as illustrated by the variation 18...♙e8? 19. ♙xa6 ♖xa6? (19...h6 20. ♖e4+-; 19...♙f8 20. ♞e3 ♞xa6 21. ♙h6+-) 20. ♞xe8+-

Black's queenside is undeveloped, so it is not advisable to maintain the tension with the move 14...♙f6 15. ♞d2 a6 (passive

play with 15...♖a6 16.♞e1 ♖ac7 17. ♖c3 ♖b7 18.♙c4 ♞d7 solves nothing, since White has time for the manoeuvre 19.♖h2!?± with the idea of ♖g4, exploiting the weakness of Black's kingside dark squares, J.Hellsten – P.Bjarnehag, Stockholm 1998.) 16.♖c3 ♖d7 17.♞e1!± White has a stable positional advantage, based on his extra space, and he has excellent chances of seizing the initiative on both flanks.



Now after 17...♖e5 18.♖xe5 ♙xg5 19.f4 ♙h4? (even after the correct response 19...♙xf4 20. ♞xf4 dxe5 21.♞xe5± White will still exert lasting pressure) 20. ♖c6 ♙xe1 (after 20...♞d7 21.♖a4 ♙d8 22.f5 ♖f6 23.fxg6 hxg6 24. ♞h6+- White's attack is crushing) 21.♞xe1 ♞d7 22.♖a4!+- Black is helpless against his opponent's numerous threats;

while after 17...♙b7 18.♞f4 ♙xg5 19.♖xg5 ♞f6 20.♞h4 h5 21. ♞g3 ♖c7 22.♖ce4 ♞e5, White wins with the spectacular 23. ♖xf7! (even stronger than what I played in the game: 23.f4 ♞d4+ 24.♖h2 ♙xd5 25.♖xd6± Dreev – A.Damia, Cento 2011) 23...♞xg3

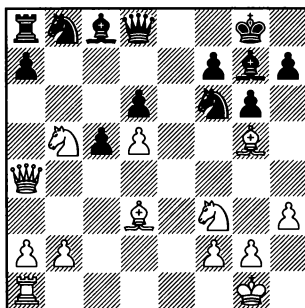
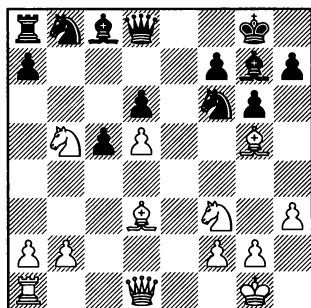
24.fxg3 ♙xd5 25.♖fxd6 ♙xa2 26. ♖c3!+- (threatening ♙xg6) and White picks off his opponent's kingside pawns.

14...f6 This looks like a solid move, but it reduces the scope of Black's bishop and Black will inevitably have to advance with f6-f5, so this is not only a loss of time but also a weakening of the position. White can retreat his bishop to various squares and he retains an enduring stable edge in all variations, for example: 15.♙d2!?N (15.♙f4!? a6 16.♖c3 ♖d7 17.♖d2 f5 18.♖c4± Khairullin – Valsecchi, Rijeka 2010 and here Black cannot carry out his standard piece regrouping of ♖b6 and ♙b7 because after 18...♖b6 White continues with 19.♖a5, preventing the development of Black's bishop to the b7-square) 15...a6 16.♖a3 ♖d7 17.♖c4 ♙b7 18.♙c2 ♞e7 (one of the ideas becomes clear now; the move 15.♙d2!? prevents the transfer of Black's knight to b6, since if 18...♖b6?? 19.♙a5+-) 19. ♙b3 ♞f7 20.♙f4± ♖e5 21.♙xe5 fxe5 22.♖g5 ♞e7 23.♖e4±, with ideas of ♖xc5, ♖b6 or ♖a5 and ♙a4, increasing the pressure on the queenside and exploiting the fact that Black's dark-squared bishop is restricted by his own pawns.

(diagram)

15.♞a4

After 15.♖d2 a6 16.♖c3 ♖bd7 17.♖c4 ♖b6 18.♞d2 ♙b7= (with



the idea of ♜c7 and ♜e8), Black obtains a quite playable position.

After 15. ♜d2 Black equalises immediately with 15... a6=, with the plan of ♗bd7-b6 and ♗b7. Instead of the principled move 15... a6, in practice Black has tried only the inaccurate 15... ♗b7?! and after 16. ♜f4, White's knight on b5 is very useful. It exerts pressure against the d6-pawn and he can take good advantage of Black's mistake on the previous move. 16... ♗bd7 17. ♗xd6 ♗xd5 18. ♗c4 ♗b6 (Black's situation is even worse after 18... ♜f8?! 19. ♜d1±, and he is beyond salvation. White's pieces dominate the whole board, Paschall – Juhasz, Budapest 2004) 19. ♗xd5 ♗bxd5 20. ♜e5 ♜f8 21. ♜d1±. The more active position of White's pieces and Black's many pawn weaknesses on the queenside guarantee White a small but enduring advantage.

(diagram)

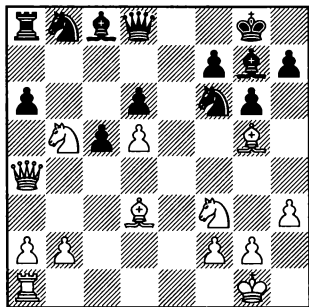
15...a6

It makes no sense for Black to

delay the move a6, for example after 15... ♗a6 16. ♜f4 ♗b4 17. ♗e4! h6 (the consequences of the piece-sacrifice 17... ♗bxd5!? 18. ♗xd5 ♗xd5 19. ♜e4 ♜d7 20. ♜xd5 ♗b7 21. ♜c4 ♗xf3 22. gxf3 ♜b8 23. a4 a6 24. ♗c3 ♜xh3 25. ♜g4± are unclear, but it is obvious that only Black is at risk of losing) 18. ♗xf6 ♜xf6 19. ♜xf6 ♗xf6 20. a3 ♗a6 (20... ♗xb2 21. ♜b1 f5 22. axb4 fxe4 23. ♜xb2 ♜b8 24. bxc5 exf3 25. c6!? ♗a6 26. c7 ♜c8 27. ♗xd6 ♜xc7 28. ♜b8+ ♗h7 29. g4 g5 30. ♗e4 ♗g7 31. d6 ♜d7 32. ♜b2, with the idea of ♗h2-g3xf3±) 21. ♗xd6 (21. ♜b1!? is an interesting idea, intending to answer 21... ♗e7 with the beautiful move 22. ♗e5!±, followed by 23. ♗c6) 21... ♗xb2 22. ♜e1!?± with the plan of ♗c4, ♗d3 and ♜e7, while the a3-pawn is taboo, since Black would lose a piece after 22... ♗xa3? 23. ♗xc8 ♜xc8 24. ♜a1+–

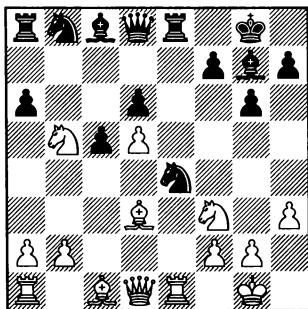
It is possibly even stronger for White to play 16. ♜h4!? ♗b4 17. ♗c4 ♗f5 18. ♜d1!?±. The difference between 16. ♜f4 and 16. ♜h4!? can be seen in the variation 16. ♜h4!? ♗b4 17. ♗c4 and here, if the queen were on f4, 17... ♗a6!? would be

strong, but with his queen on h4 White can continue with 18.a3!? (with the queen on f4, this is bad because Black could capture on d5 with his knight, attacking the white queen) 18...♙xb5 19.♙xb5 ♜b8 20.♙c4 ♜c2 21.♞a2±



16.♜c3 ♜bd7 17.♞c6 ♜b8 18.♞xd6 ♜xb2 19.♞c1↑, or 19.♞e1!?↑ White's initiative is based on his space advantage and is very stable.

B) 12...a6



Now White can choose between the main line **B1) 13.♜a3** and a move which has been played

very often recently – **B2) 13.♜c3!?**

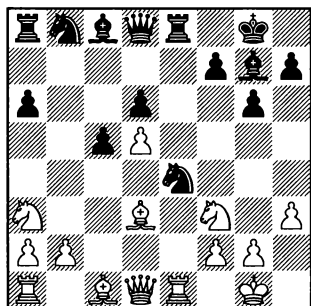
The alternatives are all less promising for White.

13.♞a4 – White has tried in several games to gain the advantage with this manoeuvre. Rather than show the developments chronologically, I shall just mention that after Black's best move 13...♜d7!, introduced into practice not by V.Topalov, as it was once thought, but by A.G. Panchenko, he has no problems whatsoever, for example: 14.♞xe4 (14.♙xe4? ♜b6 15.♞b3 axb5 16.♞xb5 ♙a6±) 14...♞xe4 15.♞xe4 (15.♙xe4? ♜b6 16.♞b3 axb5 17.♞xb5 ♙a6± with the idea of ♙c4) 15...♜f6 16.♞h4 axb5 17.♙xb5 ♞b6 18.a4 ♙b7 19.♙h6 ♙xd5 20.♙xg7 (20.♜d2 ♞b7= E.Lobron – Topalov, Dortmund 1996) 20...♙xg7 21.♞f4 ♙a7!?± (with the plan of ♙e6 and d6-d5) – White's outside passed a4-pawn is not going anywhere, while Black's activity is gradually increasing, S.Koutsin – Panchenko, Collado Villalba 1996.

This interesting line leads only to equality: 13.♞xe4!? ♞xe4 14.♜xd6 ♞b4 15.a3 ♞xd6 16.axb4 cxb4 17.♞e1 ♜d7 (Black can begin the development of his queenside with his bishop – 17...♙b7!?, attacking the enemy d5-pawn in the process) 18.♞e8+ ♞f8 19.♞xf8+ ♙xf8 20.♙b5 ♜c5 21.♙c6 ♙b7 and the ensuing endgame is approximately equal, Fressinet – Gashimov, Dresden 2008.

9. ♖f3 b5 10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. 0-0 ♖xe4 12. ♜e1 a6 13. ♖a3 ♖f6 14. ♜xe8

B1) 13. ♖a3



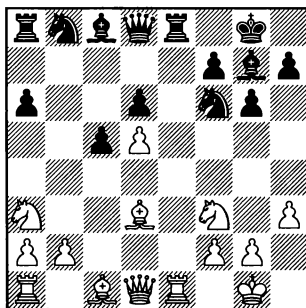
Naturally we should analyse this, White's main move. It looks as though Black can maintain the balance if he plays precisely, but nevertheless White can reach quite playable positions. We should therefore cover all the possibilities and not just the main line. This will also be useful for helping readers to understand the position.

However, it seems that the move 13. ♖c3!? is more promising for White and has become popular lately. We shall analyse this later. I believe that only future tournament practice will clarify which of these two moves is the better one.

13... ♖f6

13...f5?! – This weakening of the position is not well motivated, since Black will be unable to hold the e4-outpost, while White will have excellent chances of exploiting the weakened e6-square. 14. ♖c4 ♖d7 (Black will be doomed to passive defence after 14... ♜a7 15. ♖f4 ♜f7 16. ♜c2± Stanoev – Mi-

shev, Plovdiv 2008; it is useless for Black to opt for 14... ♖b7?!, since he cannot threaten the enemy d5-pawn effectively and the e6-square will be weakened even more. 15. ♖xe4 fxe4 16. ♖g5 ♖d4 17. ♖xe4, planning ♖g5+–, Cooksey – Anderton, London 1993; it is also good for White to play the immediate 15. ♖g5, with the idea of 15... ♖xg5 16. ♖xg5 ♜e1+ 17. ♜xe1 ♜xg5 18. ♜e6+ ♖f8 19. ♜e1+–) 15. ♖xe4 ♜xe4 (Black cannot capture with the pawn 15... fxe4 in view of 16. ♖xd6 ♜f8 17. ♖xe4, with the idea ♖eg5–e6, and he faces numerous problems as well as being a pawn down, M.Voiska – Birens, Cappelle la Grande 1993) 16. ♖xd6 ♜xe1+ 17. ♜xe1 ♖f6 18. ♖f4!? ♖xd5 19. ♖e5±, Black's king is endangered and his e6-square is terribly weak.



14. ♜xe8+

White should temporarily deflect the enemy knight on f6 from the attack against the d5-pawn.

In general, to put it simply, the essence of the oncoming fight is whether White will succeed in

countering Black's serious pressure against the d5-pawn, which is the key-factor of White's space advantage.

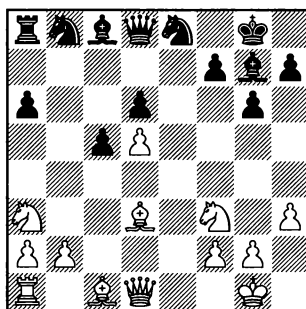
With this in mind, 14.♔g5 is bad, because Black can deflect the enemy queen from the d-file by exchanging with 14...♖xe1+ 15. ♗xe1 ♕b7 (with the idea of ♖bd7-b6), forcing White to worry about the protection of the d5-pawn, Hein – Mattick, Germany 1995.

For the same reason, it is not advisable to play 14.♖c4 ♖xe1+ 15. ♗xe1 ♕b7 (but not 15...♖xd5? 16.♔e4 ♕b7? 17.♖a5+-) 16.♔f4 ♕f8! and with d6 protected Black will win the enemy d5-pawn next move, Rechlis – Psakhis, Israel 1996.

14...♖xe8

Recapturing with the queen 14...♗xe8?! reduces the protection of the d6-pawn and enables White to develop a strong initiative: 15.♖c4 ♕f8 (for 15...♗d8 16. ♕f4 ♕f8 17. ♗b3! – see 15...♕f8; Black suffers from his lag in development in the variation 15... ♖xd5 16.♖xd6 ♗d8, Mollov – Mologarov, Plovdiv 2006, 17.♖xf7! ♖xf7 18.♕c4 ♕b7 19. ♗b3+-) 16. ♕f4!N (White's pressure only diminishes after 16.♔g5 ♖xd5 17. ♗d2= S.Ernst – D.Kaforos, Paleochora 2011) 16...♗d8 17. ♗b3! White frees the d1-square for his rook and plans to play ♗b6 or ♖b6, as appropriate. 17...♖xd5 18.♔g5 ♖e7 (Black loses after 18...

♔e7?, owing to 19.♔e4 planning ♖d1 and there is no salvation, for example: 19...♔e6 20.♔xe7 ♗xe7 21.♖d1+-) 19.♔e4 d5 20.♔xe7 (it is also good for White to play the immediate 20.♖d1 ♔e6 21.♖fe5 ♖a7 22.♔xd5 ♔xd5 23.♖g4+) 20... ♔xe7 21.♖d1 ♔e6 22.♖fe5 ♖d7 23. ♖c6 ♗e8 24.♔xd5±. Black's pieces are not deployed harmoniously, he has pawn-weaknesses on the queenside and is doomed to passive defence.



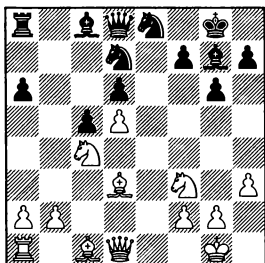
We reach the basic position of the entire variation with 9...b5 10.♖b5.

15.♔g5!

15.♖c4 – This is no doubt a logical move, but should not be White's top priority. Black easily coordinates his pieces, which is much more difficult for him to do after 15.♔g5. We should try to convince you of this in order to help you understand the position better: 15...♖d7 (it is also possible for Black to play more aggressively with 15...♕b7!?, forcing White

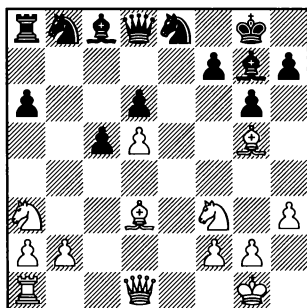
10. ♖xb5 ♖e8 11. 0-0 ♖xe4 12. ♖e1 a6 13. ♖a3 ♖f6 14. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 15. ♗g5

to worry immediately about the protection of his d5-pawn: 16. ♗f4 ♖c7 17. ♖fd2 ♖d7 18. ♖f3 ♖e5=; matters are less clear after 17... ♗xd5, although after 18. ♗e4 ♗xe4 19. ♖xe4 ♖c6∞, with the idea of ♖d4, the ensuing complications are in Black's favour)



16. ♗g5. Now this bishop sortie is not so strong, but White's alternatives do not promise him much either, because they only help Black to attack the d5-pawn immediately; (16. ♖g5 ♖df6 17. ♖f3 ♗b7 18. ♖e3 ♖e7, planning h6, P.Soln – Y.Gruenfeld, Biel 1995; if 16. ♗d2 ♗b7 17. ♗a5 ♖e7∞ Genov – Womacka, Antwerp 1992, a possible continuation is 18. ♖a4 ♗xd5 19. ♖e1 ♗e6 20. b3 ♖c8 21. ♗e4 ♖ef6 22. ♗b7 ♖b8 23. ♖c6 ♗f8 24. ♗xa6 ♖d5∞ with an excellent game for Black; if 16. ♗f4, Black has no difficulties after either 16... ♖b6!? or 16... ♖df6!?, since in both lines the ensuing complications are in his favour: White will be able to hold his d5-pawn, while Black's activity will increase) 16... ♖df6 (it is also possible to play the prophylactic move 16... ♖c7!? with the idea of ♗b7 and ♖ef6)

17. ♗c2 (the drawbacks of the active move 17. ♖b3 can be seen after 17... ♖c7 18. ♖e1 ♖b8+ when Black wins a tempo to bring his rook into action; it is less effective to play 17... a5 18. ♖e1 ♗a6∞, although even then he is not risking much, V.Tukmakov – M.Suba, Geneve 1995) 17... ♗b7 18. ♖e3 ♖c7 19. ♗b3 h6∞ with the plan of a5-a4, ♖b8 and ♗a8, or ♖d7 and ♖e8, completing development, and Black obtains a very good position.



We shall now deal in detail with **B1a) 15... ♗f6** and **B1b) 15... ♖c7!**

White maintains a stable advantage after 15... ♖f6 16. ♖c4 ♗b7 (it is too slow to play 16... ♖a7 17. ♖d2 a5 18. ♖e1±, since this enables White to mobilise his forces quickly, R.Livshits – C.Ionescu, Yerevan 1996, while if 16... h6 17. ♗f4 ♗f8 18. ♖d2± he is able to bring all his pieces into play even faster, after which his space advantage becomes even more important and his initiative increas-

es) 17.♖fd2 (it might be interesting to try the non-standard idea 17.♙c2!? ♜c7 18.♙xf6 ♙xf6 19.♙a4± with the idea of exchanging his light-squared bishop for Black's knight, which in a position with a closed centre and extra space leaves White's knights stronger than Black's bishops) 17...♜c7 18.♖e4 ♖xe4 19.♙xe4 ♖d7 20.♙f4±

It seems too passive for Black to play 15...f6?! 16.♙d2!? (with the idea of ♖c4 and ♙a5) 16...♖d7 17.♖c4 (it is also good for White to continue with 17.♜e2!? ♖e5 18.♖xe5 fxe5 19.♖c4± J.Horvath – B.Enklaar, Velden 1995) 17...♙b7 18.♙a5 ♜e7 19.♙c2 ♜f7 20.♙b3 ♙xd5 21.♖xd6 ♙xb3 22.♖xf7 ♙xd1 23.♙xd1± and Black will have to fight long and hard for a draw, Ulibin – Chatterjee, Gurgon 2009.

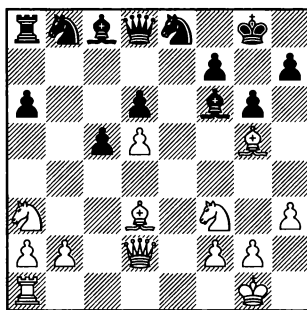
B1a) 15...♙f6

The exchange of the dark-squared bishops is almost always in White's favour, so it is quite logical that Black's last move is advantageous for his opponent.

16.♜d2!

It is less good for White to play 16.♜a4?! (with the standard idea of ♜h4 or ♜f4), because of 16...♖d7 (Black would have justified White's 16th move if he had played – 16...♙a7?! 17.♜h4± Arun Prasad – Iordachescu, Dubai 2009) 17.♙e1 ♙b7 18.♜f4 ♙xd5! (it is less

principled for Black to play 18...♙xg5 19.♖xg5 ♜f6 20.♜h4∞ A. Shishkov – Loetscher, Hallsberg 1999) 19.♙xe8+ ♜xe8 20.♙xf6 ♖xf6 21.♜xf6 ♜e6=. The combined action of White's two knights in this situation is less effective than the possibilities for Black's rook.



16...♖d7

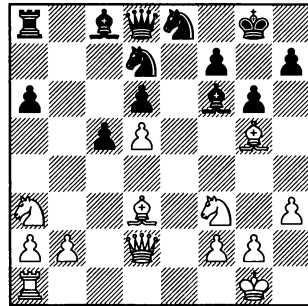
It is not advisable to try the manoeuvre 16...♙a7?! 17.♖c4 ♙e7 18.♙f4 (18.♙c2 ♙xg5 19.♜xg5 ♙d7 20.a4± J.Horvath – M.Nepomniashchy, Budapest 1994) 18...♙b7 19.♙c2± and it is not clear whether Black's rook is well placed on the e7-square, while White has achieved a lot. He has stabilised the d5-pawn and deployed his minor pieces in ideal fashion, because it is exactly the play with the minor pieces which is the essence of this position.

White maintains his space advantage after 16...♙b7 17.♙e1 (it is also interesting to consider a move which reduces his oppo-

10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. 0-0 ♜xe4 12. ♜e1 a6 13. ♜a3 ♜f6 14. ♜xe8 ♜xe8 15. ♙g5

nent's active possibilities: 17. ♙e4!? and after Black's most probable response 17... ♜d7, with 18. ♜e1 the game transposes to the variation which we analyse via 17. ♜e1 ♜d7 18. ♙e4, except that Black has been deprived of the possibility of 17... ♙xd5, but we will very soon see that this is controversial...) 17... ♜d7 (it is too risky for Black to capture the d5-pawn with 17... ♙xd5 18. ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 19. ♙xf6 ♜d7 20. ♙h4 ♙xf3 21. gxf3 d5 22. f4! ♜e6 23. f5 ♜c6 24. ♜e3± and White's two active bishops are much stronger than Black's single rook) 18. ♙e4! This is the best way to protect the d5-pawn. 18... ♙xg5 (after 18... ♜e5 19. h4±, the position remains more or less the same: 18... ♜b6 19. b3! ♙xg5 20. ♜xg5 ♜f6 21. ♜c4! – see 18... ♙g5) 19. ♜xg5 ♜ef6 (19... ♜df6!? 20. ♜c4±) 20. ♜c4 ♜b6 21. b3!, White lets his opponent exchange on c4, after which he need not worry about the protection of the d5-pawn, which is his main problem... (Black's defence is much easier after 21. ♜xb6 ♜xb6 22. ♙f3 ♜b4 23. ♜xb4 cxb4 24. ♜e7 ♙xd5 25. ♙xd5 ♜xd5= Aseev – Nepomniashchy, St Petersburg 1995, or 22... ♜e8 23. ♜xe8+ ♜xe8=, since exchanges are in favour of the defender) 21... ♜b8 (the exchange on c4 helps White to consolidate his space advantage immediately: 21... ♜xc4 22. bxc4 ♙c8 23. ♙c2 ♜a7 24. ♜e3± Epishin – Topalov, Las Palmas 1994; 21... ♜xe4?! 22. ♜xe4±; a small tactical

skirmish follows 21... ♜bxd5 22. ♜a5 ♜c7 23. ♜xb7 ♜xb7 24. ♜d1 h6 25. ♙xd5 ♜xd5 26. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 27. ♙xd5 hxg5 28. ♙xd6±, but it leads to a situation in which Black must fight for a draw in a difficult position; or 22. ♙f3!? ♜c7 23. h4±) 22. ♜f4 ♜xc4 23. bxc4± and White has an edge, thanks to his space advantage and good prospects to develop an initiative on the king-side.



17. ♜c4

White should not delay the occupation of the c4-outpost.

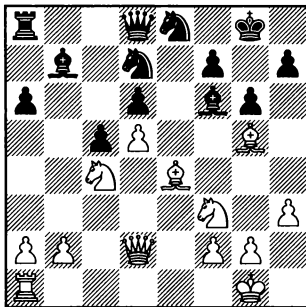
For example, White does not achieve much with the slower move 17. ♙e4, since after 17... ♜b6 18. b3 ♙xg5 19. ♜xg5 ♜f6= or 17... ♙xg5 18. ♜xg5 h6!?∞, the fact that Black's dark-squared bishop is absent from the board is not very detrimental to him, while his light-squared bishop is clearly superior to its white counterpart on e4.

17... ♙b7

It seems a bit too slow for Black to play 17... a5 18. ♜e1 ♙a6 19. ♙h6↑

After 17...♖b6?! Black exchanges White's strong knight on c4, but the consequences for Black are very bad, for example: 18.♗xb6 ♕xg5 (18...♝xb6? 19.♞e1+-) 19.♞e2 ♜b8 20.♖xc8 ♞xc8 21.♕xa6±

18.♕e4



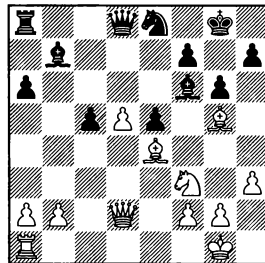
18...♕xg5

White maintains a stable advantage following 18...♜b8 19.♞e1 ♖b6 20.b3!?±

Black can try to oust his opponent's problematic knight away from the c4-square with the move 18...♖b6!?, but White has another way to develop an initiative on the queenside: 19.♖a5 (he also has an advantage in the endgame after 19.b3!? h6 20.♕xf6 ♖xf6 21. ♕xg6 ♖xc4 22.bxc4 fxc6 23.♝xh6 ♝f8 24.♝xg6+ ♝g7 25.♝xg7+ ♖xg7 26.♜b1±) 19...♕xg5 20.♖xc8 ♞xc7 21.b4!↑

Black can force White's strong knight on c4 to find another square or be exchanged with the move 18...♖e5, but this does not

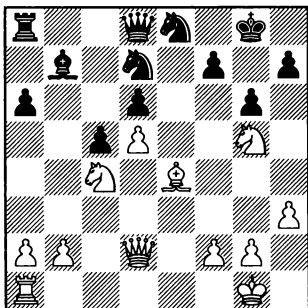
solve all his problems either. There might follow 19.♖cxe5 dxe5 (it would be even worse for Black to play 19...♕xg5 20.♖xf7!? ♕xd2 21.♖xd8 ♞xd8 22.♖xd2 ♖f6 23. ♖d1!±, because after White regains the pawn on d5 he will begin to attack the enemy pawn on d6)



20.♖d1± – The passed d5-pawn will help White to maintain his space advantage and will guarantee him an edge, although it is difficult to say whether he will manage to achieve anything really meaningful. It is less convincing for White to play a move which has been seen quite often: 20.♞e1 (instead of 20.♖d1) 20...♖d6 (20...♕xg5 21.♖xg5 ♝d6!±∞, or 21...f5?! 22.♕xf5 gxf5 23.♞xe5±) 21.♕c2 ♕xg5 22.♖xg5 ♝b6 23.♕b3 c4 24.♕a4 ♝d4= Solozhenkin – Berelowitsch, St Petersburg 1999, but 20.h4!?N is a very interesting option. It seems to me that the advance of the h-pawn is an excellent additional resource for White in this position: 20...♖d6 21.♕c2 ♕e7 22.♕xe7 ♝xe7 23.♞e1 f6 24. h5↑

19.♖xg5

10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. 0-0 ♜xe4 12. ♜e1 a6 13. ♜a3 ♜f6 14. ♜xe8 ♜xe8 15. ♙g5



19... ♜df6

This move does not solve Black's problems, but the alternatives are not of much help either, owing to White's space advantage.

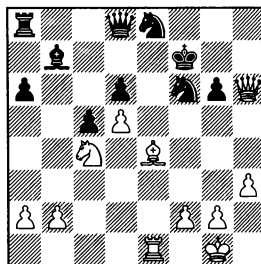
For example, after 19...h6, White can demonstrate one of the pluses of having extra space – mobilising forces for an attack. Now it becomes possible for White to sacrifice a piece 20. ♜xf7 (it is less effective to opt for 20. ♜f3 ♜df6 21. ♜e1 ♜xe4 22. ♜xe4 ♜f6 23. ♜h4 ♜f8 24. ♜e3 ♜e8= and it is difficult to see how White can improve his position, L.Sopur – P.Murdzia, Czestochowa 1992.) 20... ♜xf7 21. ♜xh6 ♜f8 22. ♜e1 ♜f6 23. ♜e3 ♜g7 (23... ♜g8? 24. ♙xg6!+-) 24. ♜g5 ♜g8 25. h4→ with the plan of ♜g3 and h5.

Black has no good prospects after 19... ♜e5 20. b3!?!±

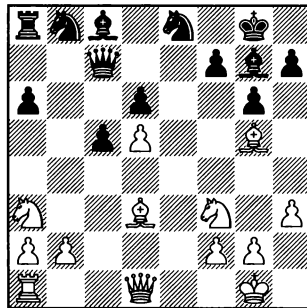
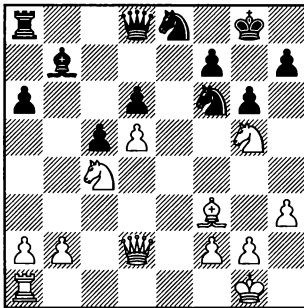
20. ♙f3!?

I have also played the more active move 20. ♜e1!?, hoping that

Black would play impulsively 20... h6? (it is much better to defend with 20... ♜c8, although even then White can fortify his d5-pawn, consolidating his space advantage, with 21. ♙f3 ♜c7 22. ♜a5±, planning ♜e4) 21. ♜xf7! ♜xf7 22. ♜xh6 and White has a dangerous attack.



My game continued with 22... ♜g7 (after 22... ♜xe4 White has the zwischenzug 23. ♜h7+ ♜g7 and only then 24. ♜xe4 ♙c8 25. g4 ♜f6 26. ♜e3 ♜b8 27. ♜xd6+ ♜xd6 28. ♜f3+- and Black is beyond salvation: he loses even faster after 23... ♜f8 24. ♜xe4 ♜f6 25. ♜f4 g5 26. ♜f5 ♙xd5 27. ♜g6+-, or 23... ♜f6 24. ♜xe4 ♜g7 25. ♜g4+-; Black is also lost after 22... ♜g8, in view of the precise reply 23. ♜g5!+- with the threat of ♙xg6 and ♜e3-g3) 23. ♙xg6+ ♜g8 (23... ♜f8 24. ♜e6! ♙xd5 25. ♜xd6+-) and here after the spectacular move 24. ♜e6!+- Black will not survive for long: 24... ♙xd5 (24... ♜f8 25. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 26. ♜xd6!+-) 25. ♜xd6 ♙xc4 (25... ♜e7 26. ♜xd5!+-) 26. ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 27. ♜h4 1-0 Dreev – De Firmian, Biel 1995.



20...h6 21.♞e4 ♞xe4 22.♙xe4 ♟g7 23.♙f3 ♞f6 24.♞e1 a5 25.a4 ♙a6?! 26.♞xa5 ♞b6 27.♞c6 ♞b3 28.a5 ♙c4 29.♞e3 ♞a2 30.♞c3+- Dreev – Wojtaszek, Warsaw 2009.

There are numerous positional factors which stack up against the idea of Black exchanging the dark-squared bishops. White's dark-squared bishop is less active, while Black's bishop attacks the b2-pawn along the long diagonal and supports the strategically important points d4 and e5, which are critical in numerous variations. In addition, this exchange provides White with the possibility of exploiting the weak dark squares on the kingside as well as the weak d6-pawn, which the bishop could protect from the f8-square if necessary.

B1b) 15...♞c7!
(diagram)
16.♞a4!?

If White plays in routine fashion Black simply completes his development and his pressure

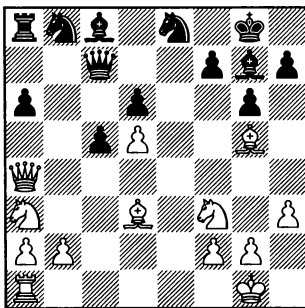
against the enemy d5-pawn can even make his position preferable: 16.♞d2?! ♙b7 17.♞e1 (17.♙c4 ♞d7 18.♞e1 ♞ef6 J.Clavijo – G. Hernandez, San Salvador 1998) 17...♞d7 18.♙c2 ♞ef6 Gelfand – Topalov, Moscow 1994.

It is useless for White to try 16.♞e2?! ♞f6. It is not worth forcing the enemy knight to occupy this square. It wants to go there anyway, while the White's queen is misplaced on e2 since in the future it can be attacked by the enemy rook along the e-file. 17.♞c4 (White's 16th move would be justified if it could bear fruit immediately: 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♞c4 ♙b7 19.♞fd2 ♞d7 20.♞e4 ♙xd5 21.♞cxd6 ♙d4 22.♙xa6 ♞b8, however it seems that the result is just the opposite of what he wanted; Black has a very dangerous initiative for the pawn and his compensation is more than sufficient) 17...♙b7 18.♞d1 ♞bd7 19.♙f4 ♙f8 20.♞e3 ♞b6 and Black can even think about when best to recapture on d5. Possibly he should first improve his position by ad-

10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. 0-0 ♜xe4 12. ♜e1 a6 13. ♖a3 ♜f6 14. ♜xe8 ♜xe8 15. ♔g5

vancing his a-pawn, S.Ivanov – E.Borulya, Germany 1995.

16. ♖c4 ♔b7 17. ♔d2 – The pawn-sacrifice is not quite correct (it is of no use for White to try to hold on to the d5-pawn – 17. ♔c2 ♜d7 18. ♜d3 ♖b6 19. ♖xb6 ♜xb6 planning ♖c7, G.Balazs – S.Kosmo, Budapest 2007; 17. ♜c1 ♜d7 K.Georgiev – L.Aroshidze, Balaguer 2009 and in both variations, sooner or later the pawn will be lost) 17... ♔xd5 18. ♔a5 ♜b7 19. ♖b6 ♔xf3 (White's pieces become very active after 19... ♜a7 20. ♖xd5 ♜xd5 21. ♜c2 ♜f6 22. ♜d1 Z.Kozul – O.Cvitan, Rijeka 2009) 20.gxf3 ♜a7 21. ♔e4 ♜e7 (with the idea of 22. ♖c8 ♜g5) Black retains his extra pawn and completes his development successfully.



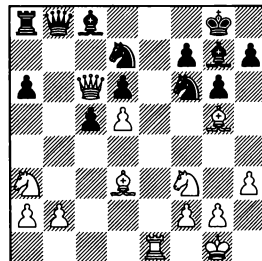
16... ♜f6

This is an active move which forces White to immediately deal with the problem of the protection of his d5-pawn.

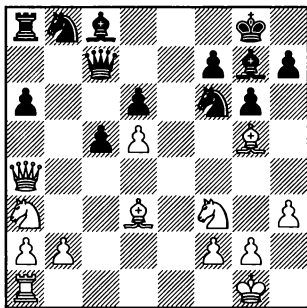
The careless move 16... ♔d7?! can be refuted with 17. ♜h4! (this

is much stronger than what I played in the game: 17. ♜b3 ♜a7 18. ♖c4 ♜b7 19. ♜c2 ♜f6 20. ♜d1± Dreev – K.Sek, Ulan Ude 2009) and now 17... ♔xb2? 18. ♔d8 ♜c8 19. ♔g5 h5 fails to the spectacular refutation 20. ♜xf7! ♔xa1 21. ♖h6+ ♖h8 22. ♜e4+- and he is helpless against White's checkmating threats.

It seems too slow for Black to opt for 16... ♜d7 because after 17. ♜e1 ♜ef6 (the hasty 17... ♔b7? 18. ♜e7 ♜d8 19. ♔xa6 ♔xd5 20. ♔b5± enables White's rook to create dangerous threats on the seventh rank) 18. ♜c6 ♜b8 (Black has even more serious problems after 18... ♜a7 19. ♖c4 ♔f8 20. ♔f4±, when White has a dangerous initiative and he will also capture the d6-pawn; Black cannot play 20... ♜xc6 21.dxc6 ♖b8 22. ♔g5+- since the threat of White's rook penetrating to the e8-square decides the game; the careless 18... ♜xc6? 19.dxc6 ♖b6 20. ♔xf6 ♔xf6 also loses after the accurate response 21. ♖c4! ♖xc4 22. ♜e8+ ♖g7 23. ♔xc4 ♔b7 24. ♜xa8 ♔xa8 25.c7 ♔b7 26. ♔d5 ♔c8 27. ♖d2+- with the threat of ♖c4-b6)



19. ♖c4 ♗b7 (if 19... ♗f8 20. ♗f4 ♗b7 21. ♗xd6 then after either 21... ♗xd6 22. ♖xd6 ♗xd5 23. ♖xb8+!? ♖xb8 24. ♖fd2± or 21... ♗xc6 22. ♗xb8 ♖xd5 23. ♗g3± White maintains a slight but stable positional advantage in the endgame, thanks to the possibility of exploiting the pawn weaknesses on Black's queenside) 20. ♖xd6 ♗xd5 (White also obtains a superior endgame after 20... ♖xd6 21. ♖xd6 ♗xd5 22. b3; his pawn-structure is clearly better, so he will have a slight but stable edge; 22... a5 23. ♗b5± but not 23. ♗c4?! ♗xc4 24. ♖xc4 a4=) 21. ♖xb8+ (21.b3±) 21... ♖xb8 22. ♗f4± White was slightly better, owing to Black's weak queenside pawns, in the game C.Horvath – P.Hardicsay, Hungary 1994.



In this position we shall analyse two possibilities of approximately equal strength: **B1b1)** 17. ♖b5!? and **B1b2)** 17. ♗e1.

B1b1) 17. ♖b5!?

This is essentially a practical try.

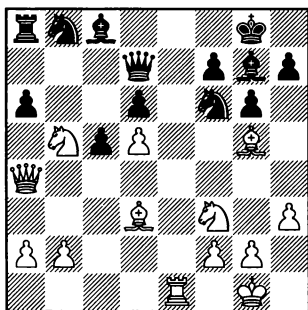
17... ♖d7!

Black cannot equalise with the more natural move 17... ♖b6 18. ♗xf6!? ♗xf6 19. ♗e1! (there is nothing more than a draw after 19. ♖f4 axb5! 20. ♖xf6 ♖d7 21. ♖e7 ♖g7 22. ♖g5 ♖e5 23. ♖e4 ♖xd3 24. ♖xd6 ♗a7= 25. ♖e8+ ♖g8 26. ♖f6+ ♖g7, draw, Palliser – Kononenko, Plovdiv 2010) 19... ♖g7 (the tactical complications are in White's favour after 19... ♗d7 20. ♖f4 ♗xb5 21. ♗xb5 ♖g7 22. ♗a4 ♗a7 23. g4 ♗e7 24. ♗xe7 ♗xe7 25. ♗e8!± and Black comes under strong pressure; 23... ♖xb2? 24. ♖xd6+–) 20. ♖a3! (it is weaker to continue with 20. ♖c3 ♖b4 21. ♖xb4 cxb4 22. ♖e4 ♗e7 23. ♗c1 ♖d7 24. ♗c6 ♖f6 25. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 26. ♗b6 a5 27. ♖d4 and Black should manage to hold this position after 27... ♗d8 28. ♗xd6 ♖e7 29. ♗c6 ♗b7 30. d6+ ♖f6 31. ♗c1 ♗c8=; it is harmless for White to play 21. ♖e8 ♖d7 22. ♖e4 ♖e5 23. ♖xf6 ♗f5 24. a3=, or 24. ♗xe5 ♗xe8 25. ♖xe8+ ♖f8 26. ♖xd6 ♗xd3 27. ♗e8+ ♖g7 28. ♗e7 ♖xb2 29. ♗xf7+ ♖g8 30. ♗e7 ♖f8 31. ♗e8+ ♖g7 32. ♗e7=) and now if 20... ♗b7 21. ♖e4 ♖d7 22. ♖c4 ♖c7 23. ♖f4 ♖b6 24. ♖xd6 White gains the advantage after 24... ♖xd5 25. ♗e4± or 24... ♖xd6 25. ♖xd6 ♗xd5 26. ♖e8±

18. ♗e1

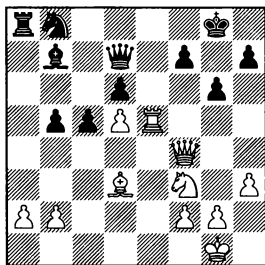
White does not achieve much by going into the endgame: 18. ♖c3 ♖xa4 19. ♖xa4 ♖bd7 20. ♖d2 ♖e5 21. ♖xf6 ♗xf6 22. ♖e4 ♗g7 23. ♗e2 ♗d7 24. ♖ac3 ♖b8 25. ♖xd6 ♖xb2 26. ♖b1 ♖xb1+ 27. ♖xb1 ♗f8=

10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. 0-0 ♜xe4 12. ♜e1 a6 13. ♜a3 ♜f6 14. ♜xe8 ♜xe8 15. ♔g5



18... ♜xd5

After 18... ♜b7 White can continue with 19. ♔xf6 ♔xf6 20. ♖f4 ♔e5 21. ♜xe5 axb5



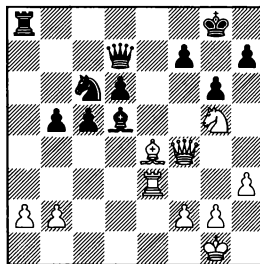
and here:

the position becomes completely unclear after 22. ♜e1 ♔xd5∞ V.Babula – P.Simacek, Prague 2007;

however, we should mention that White has a guaranteed draw by perpetual check after 22. ♜h5 gxh5 23. ♔f5 ♖e8 24. ♖h6 ♜d7 25. ♔h7+ ♜h8=. It often happens in practice that a player enters a complicated tactical variation in which if both play correctly the game ends in a draw. Still, it needs precise play and deep knowledge of the variation, otherwise a sin-

gle inaccurate move can lead to a catastrophe, so the players are simply testing each out with such variations;

Interesting complications can arise after 22. ♜e3 ♔xd5 23. ♔g5 ♜c6 (Black might pay dearly if he tries to capture a pawn with 23... ♜xa2 24. ♖h4 h5 25. ♜xf7! ♔xf7 26. ♖f6!+–) 24. ♔e4. White is trying to gain the e4-square for his knight and from there it will exert pressure against the weak dark squares in Black's camp.

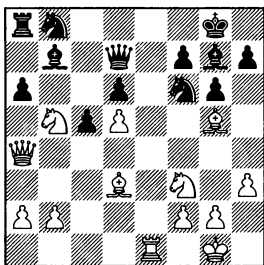


White's hopes are realised after 24... ♔xa2?! 25. ♔xc6 ♖xc6 26. ♜e4↑ – his pressure on the dark squares and on the kingside will be very unpleasant for Black and this more than compensates for his material deficit.

24... ♜a4 25. ♖h4 h5 26. g4 ♔xa2 27. b3 ♔xb3 28. ♜xb3 d5 29. gxh5 dxe4 30. hxg6 fxg6 31. ♜xb5 and Black must try to save the game by perpetual check: 31... e3 32. ♖xa4 exf2+ 33. ♜xf2 ♖d2+ 34. ♜g3 ♖e1=; perpetual check is also of great practical importance in the line 28. gxh5 d5 29. hxg6 fxg6 30. ♖h6 ♜xe4 31. ♜xe4 dxe4 32. ♖xg6+ ♖g7 33. ♖e8=. Whenever

you sacrifice material, you would like to have a guarantee that it was not done in vain and that you will obtain good compensation. In this particular case, this can be perpetual check.

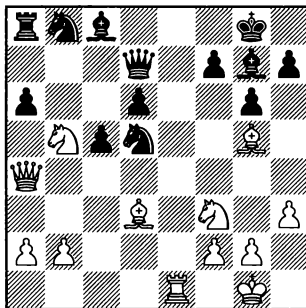
However, after 18...♙b7 it is best for White to develop his king-side initiative in the now familiar fashion:



19.♞h4! ♜xd5 (White maintains a stable positional advantage after 19...♞d8 20.♜c3 ♜bd7 21.♙c2!± with the idea of ♙a4) 20.♜c3 and here after Black's best move 20...♜xc3 (after 20...♞c8 White can play 21.♜e4± – he has the initiative and better piece deployment, which compensates for his material deficit, but it would be even stronger to play 21.♙c4! ♙xc3 22.bxc3 ♜d7 23.♜d2!± with the idea of ♜e4+–, or 23.♙e7!? ♞c6 24.♜g5 h5 25.f3 ♞e8 26.♙xd6!±) 21.♞e7 ♞a4 22.♞xa4 ♜xa4 23.♞xb7 ♜c6 24.♙c2 ♜a5 25.♞d7± the endgame is difficult for Black.

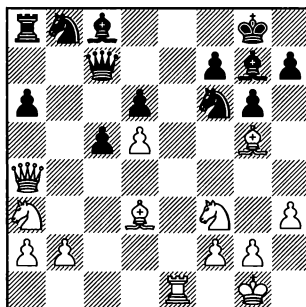
(diagram)

19.♞b3 axb5 20.♙xb5 ♜c6 21.♞xd5 ♙b7



Now the position is very complicated after 22.♞b3 or 22.a4 T.Polak – P.Simacek, Brno 2009. White's game is easier, but it is quite difficult to say whether he can turn this into something substantial.

B1b2) 17.♞e1



17...♙b7

The move 17...♜bd7 presents White with additional possibilities. 18.♞c6. He begins active play on the queenside, exploiting Black's lagging development there. 18...♞b8 19.♜c4 ♙f8 20.♙f4 (the prophylactic move 20.♜a5!? prevents the development of Black's queen-

10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. 0-0 ♜xe4 12. ♜e1 a6 13. ♜c3

side with ♜b7) 20... ♜b7 21. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 22. ♜xd6 ♜xd5 23. ♜xb8+ (White can enter more complicated positions with 23. ♜e7!?, since avoiding the exchange of queens should, in principle, be in White's favour, since his pieces are more actively placed and he has the initiative) 23... ♜xb8 24. ♜fd2± and White has a stable advantage in this endgame.

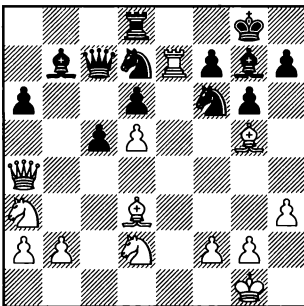
18. ♜d2!?

Black has no problems after 18. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 19. ♜f4 ♜d7= Cebalo – Chabanon, Geneva 1996.

18... ♜bd7

White's 18th move is justified in the variation 18... ♜xd5?! 19. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 20. ♜e8+ ♜g7 21. ♜e4! ♜xe4 (the pin along the eighth rank might end in disaster for Black after 21... ♜b7 22. ♜xb7 ♜xb7 23. ♜b3±) 22. ♜xe4 and Black is nearly lost, since after 22... ♜d4 23. ♜b5 ♜c6 24. ♜bc3+–, he will have to give up his knight on b8 in order to avoid the worst.

19. ♜e7 ♜d8



20. ♜e4

20. ♜xa6 ♜xa6 21. ♜xa6 ♜xd5

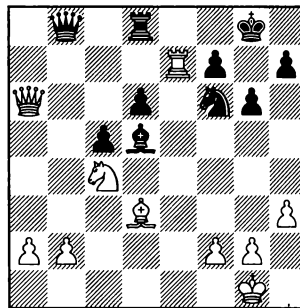
22. ♜b5 ♜b8 23. ♜e1 ♜f6 24. ♜xf6 ♜7xf6∞

Black need not fear 20. ♜f4 because after 20... ♜e8 (however this is the only move, since White is threatening ♜xf6 and ♜e4) 21. ♜xf6 ♜xe7 22. ♜xe7 ♜e5= Black gives back the piece and will gradually activate his forces.

20... ♜b8 21. ♜c4 ♜xd5 22. ♜xf6+

White does not achieve much with 22. ♜exd6 ♜b6 23. ♜xb6 ♜xd6 24. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 25. ♜f4 ♜xd3 26. ♜xf6 ♜b1=

22... ♜xf6 23. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 24. ♜xa6∞

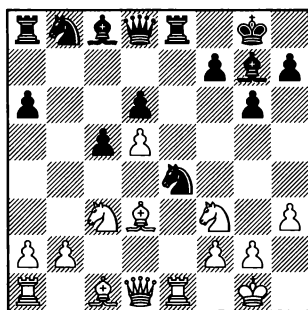


We have analysed Black's best moves throughout and we have reached a position which is perfectly playable for both sides; nevertheless, from a practical point of view White's prospects should be considered preferable.

B2) 13. ♜c3!?

This is the contemporary treatment of this variation. I have been playing this interesting

modern move myself recently. Black is faced with a rather unpleasant psychological choice. He must either accept a pawn sacrifice, after which White obtains very good attacking possibilities, or decline the gift and have to defend a solid but statically worse position.



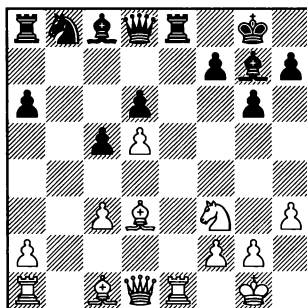
13...dxc3

Black must develop his queen-side quickly.

If he slows down with 13...d6 White gains a very dangerous initiative with 14.♖xe8+ ♜xe8 15.♙g5 (we are already familiar with this important gain of tempo) 15...♙f6 (after 15...♞c7 16.♞a4 ♞d7 17.♞e1 ♞ef6 White can increase his pressure with 18.♞f4↑, with the idea of ♞e7, or obtain a stable edge in the endgame with 18.♞c6!? ♞b8 19.♞e4 ♙b7 20.♞xd6 ♞xd6 21.♞xd6 ♙xd5 22.b3±) 16.♞d2 (it is also good for White to continue in the standard way with 16.♞a4!↑ planning ♞e1 and ♞f4) 16...♞d7 17.♞e1 – see 12...♞f6 13.♖xe8+ ♜xe8 14.♙g5 ♙f6 15.♞d2 a6 16.♞c3 ♞d7 17.♞e1.

14.bxc3

Black is able to solve his development problems after 14.♖xe8+ ♞xe8 15.bxc3 ♞d7! (15...♙xc3 – see 14.bxc3 ♙xc3) 16.♞b1 ♞e5 17.♞xe5 ♙xe5= Richter – Syre, Berlin 2010.



14...♙xc3

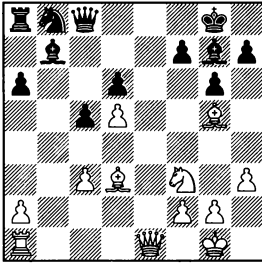
If Black is going to have to suffer, he might as well gain something in return, otherwise White will simply consolidate his space advantage.

For example, after 14...♞d7 15.♙g5 ♖xe1+ 16.♞xe1 ♞f6 17.♞d2 ♞c7 18.♞e1 ♙d7 (the active move 18...c4? can be refuted with the simple move 19.♞f4!± and now 19...♞xd5?! fails to 20.♞e8+ ♙f8 21.♖xf8+ ♜xf8 22.♞d4+– and the weakness of the dark squares in Black's camp becomes decisive, Pashikian – Berg, Rijeka 2010.) 19.c4 ♞e8 20.♖xe8+ ♞xe8 21.♞e3± White can exploit his space advantage by increasing his pressure on the kingside.

14...♖xe1+ 15.♞xe1 ♙b7 (15...

10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. 0-0 ♜xe4 12. ♜e1 a6 13. ♜c3

♜d7 16. ♜g5 – see 14.... ♜d7 15. ♜g5 ♜xe1 16. ♜xe1; instead of 16. ♜g5, the position is less clear after 16. ♜f4 and now, not 16... ♜f6 17. c4 ♜h5 18. ♜g5 ♜f6 19. ♜e3±, which helps White consolidate his space advantage, Parligras – Simacek, Plovdiv 2012, but 16... ♜b7 17. ♜xd6 ♜xd5 18. ♜d1 ♜f6∞ and White can hardly achieve much in the resulting position) 16. ♜g5 ♜c8



17. ♜c4 (White should definitely hold on to his d5-pawn, since it is the basis of his space advantage; for example, he does not achieve anything with 17. ♜d1 ♜xd5 18. ♜e4 ♜xe4 19. ♜xe4 ♜a7 20. ♜xd6 ♜d7=) 17... ♜d7 18. ♜b1 ♜f6 19. ♜d2! (White has nothing but problems if he opts for 19. ♜e7?! ♜xd5 20. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 21. ♜xf6 ♜xc4 22. ♜xd6 ♜xa2∞ Romanko – Zizlova, Taganrog 2011) 19... ♜c7 (you can see now the idea of the move 19. ♜d2! – Black cannot capture on d5 with either of his pieces: 19... ♜xd5 20. ♜xb7 ♜xb7 21. ♜e4±; or 19... ♜xd5 20. ♜xf6 ♜xc4 21. ♜xc4 ♜xf6 22. ♜b6±) 20. ♜e4 ♜xe4 21. ♜xe4±. White has succeeded in preserving his space

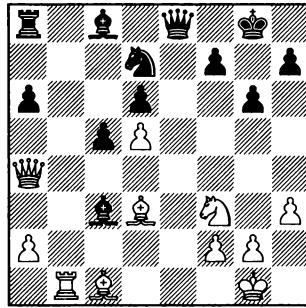
advantage and his pawn on c3 is indirectly protected: if 21... ♜xc3?! 22. ♜e7±

15. ♜xe8+

Here 15. ♜g5?! fails to 15... ♜xe1+ 16. ♜xe1 ♜f6!±, and White does not obtain any compensation for the pawn.

15... ♜xe8 16. ♜b1 ♜d7 17. ♜a4

White is threatening ♜c6.

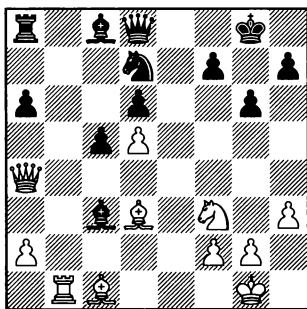


17... ♜d8

The move 17... ♜f8?! enables White to exploit the undefended c7-square: 18. ♜c6 ♜a7 (the drawbacks of the move 17... ♜f8?! can be seen in the variation 18... ♜b8 19. ♜xb8 ♜xb8 20. ♜c7!, which would have been impossible after 17... ♜d8 and now if 20... ♜d7 21. ♜f4±) 19. ♜f4± with the idea of 19... ♜e5?! 20. ♜xe5 dxe5 21. ♜e3 a5 22. d6+– Thingstad – Hinrichs, Hamburg 2012.

One of the ideas behind the pawn-sacrifice on c3 can be illustrated by the variation 17... ♜f6

18.♖c4 and Black must remove his bishop from the long diagonal. This is one of the main reasons that White sacrificed a pawn. 18...♙a5 19.♙g5! White has serious compensation for the pawn and I do not believe that it would be easy to find players who would be willing to test this with Black. (White has another possibility, which enables him to maintain the tension, but is less promising – 19.♙b2 ♘d7 20.♙a1!?⚡) 19...♘h5 (19...♙d8? 20.♞e1 ♗f8 21.♗h4+–) 20.g4 (another interesting try is 20.♗h4!?, planning to exploit the weak dark squares in Black's camp) 20...♙g7 21.♗f4 (here it is possible for White to try 21.♙f6 ♙d8 22.♙a1⚡ with very unpleasant pressure on Black's kingside) 21...♗d7 22.♘d2!↑ (with the idea of ♘e4) and Black will have great problems protecting the weak dark squares in his position.



18.♙f4

It is useless for White to play instead 18.♖c6?!, since Black can

respond with 18...♗b8 and, as we have already mentioned, his queen protects the important c7-square from d8. 19.♗xd6 (it is quite safe but not very promising for White to play 19.♙f4 ♖xb1+ 20.♙xb1 ♘b8 21.♗xd6 ♗xd6 22.♙xd6 ♘d7=, or 20...♘f6 21.♙d3 ♗d7 22.♙xd6 ♙b7= Fressinet – Iturrizaga, Pamplona 2010) 19...♖xb1 20.♙xb1 ♗b6+. White's d5-pawn used to be the symbol of his space advantage, but it became a target for Black, so White had to think about equalising.

White can try to force Black to commit his dark-squared bishop with the move 18.♗b3!?, exploiting the misplacement of Black's pieces on the queenside, for example: 18...♙f6 19.♖c6 (19.♙f4? c4!+) 19...♗b8 20.♙f4 ♗b6 21.♖xb6 ♘xb6 22.♙xd6 ♙b7 23.♗xb7 ♗xd6 24.♗xa6± with the idea of a4-a5. White's outside passed a-pawn guarantees him a slight but enduring edge.

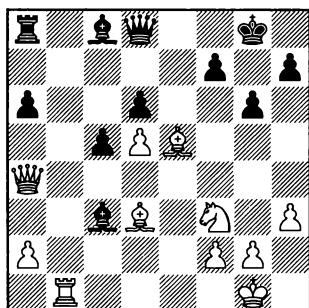
18...♘e5 19.♙xe5

The other capture is not at all promising for White: 19.♘xe5?! dxe5 20.♙g5 ♗xg5 21.♖c6 ♙b7 22.♖xb7 ♙d4 23.d6, draw, San Segundo – Espinosa Aranda, Sauzal 2010.

(diagram)

In this position if Black recaptures with the bishop 19...♙xe5 then 20.♘xe5 dxe5 21.♖c6 leads to a situation in which White regains his pawn and, thanks to his

10. ♖xb5 ♜e8 11. 0-0 ♜xe4 12. ♜e1 a6 13. ♜c3



passed d-pawn, he can rely on having an edge, while recapturing with the pawn 19...dxe5 leads after 20. ♜c6 ♜d7 21. ♜xc5 ♜c8 22. ♜d6 (22. ♜e3!? is also interesting, practically forcing the win of a pawn, for example 22...e4 23. ♜xa6! ♜a8 24. ♜xc3 exf3 25. ♜b7) 22...♜f5 23. ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 24. ♜xf5 gxf5 25. ♜h4± to an endgame clearly in White's favour.

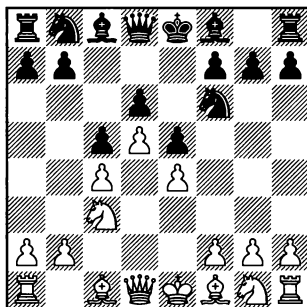
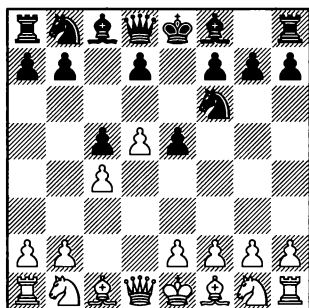
Part 3. The Czech Benoni

and

the Hromadka System

The Czech Benoni

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5



This set-up is called the Czech (or Old) Benoni and it is less dynamic and somewhat more passive than the Modern Benoni. Still, it has its adherents and in general, these are players who, for various reasons, do not like long forcing lines and prefer to play positions of a closed type.

4.♖c3 d6 5.e4

This is the basic position of the Czech Benoni, in which White's space advantage is a permanent factor.

After 5...♗e7, the position resembles the Old Indian pawn-structure, while after 5...g6 we reach the structures of the King's Indian Defence, or later, by transposition, some unfavourable King's Indian sideline.

I should mention that in the pawn-structures arising from the Old Indian and King's Indian Defences White's space advantage is not always such an important factor in the fight for the opening ad-

vantage. For example, in the Old Indian Defence after 1.d4 ♘f6 2. c4 d6 3.♘c3 ♘bd7 4.e4 e5 5.d5 ♘c5, or in one of the variations of the classical system in the King's Indian Defence 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6. ♗e2 e5 7.d5 a5!?, White's space advantage does not promise him anything special. These well-known positions are very complicated and offer chances for both sides.

In the set-up we are analyzing, Black's position, in comparison to the above-mentioned examples, has a definite drawback typical of such structures. He has played c7-c5 too early and this considerably reduces his possibilities of organizing active counterplay. In general, in the Old Indian and King's Indian structures, with a closed centre (white pawns c4+d5+e4, black pawns c7+d6+e5) Black does not play c7-c5 so early, but tries to undermine his opponent's centre with the move c7-c6, or deploy his knight from b8 via d7 (a6) to the c5-square, after first securing its position there with the move a7-a5. In the Czech Benoni, this strategically important c5-square has already been occupied by his pawn. In fact, the Czech Benoni, as you will be convinced in the variations which will follow, is something like an inferior (for Black) form of the Old Indian and King's Indian Defence.

The move 5...♗e7 (Chapter 15) is played much more often than Black's alternatives. It is the most typical for the Czech Benoni structure. His position after 5... ♗e7 is quite solid (he has no obvious weaknesses), but very passive. Still, White must play very accurately if he wishes to obtain a considerable advantage. If Black succeeds in exchanging the dark-squared bishops, which in this pawn-structure is a very desirable goal for him to accomplish (for example in the variation 6.♗d3 0-0 7.♘ge2 ♘h5!? and 8...♗g5=), then he may obtain a quite acceptable position.

5...♘bd7 (Chapter 15) is Black's most flexible move. The idea is to delay determining the position of his dark-squared bishop and wait and see what set-up White will choose. If he plays the set-up with 6.g3, which seems very good for him after 5...♗e7 6. g3, then Black can opt for 6...g6 7.♗g2 ♗g7 8.♘ge2 0-0 9.0-0, which is an acceptable set-up in the King's Indian Defence.

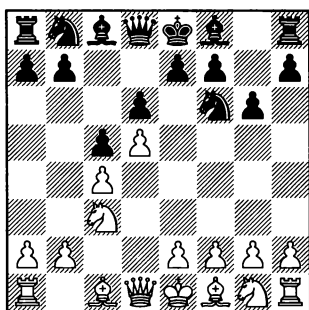
The move 5...g6 (Chapter 16) transposes to structures from the King's Indian Defence, but with an early c7-c5 and, as we have already mentioned, with all the drawbacks that this entails. Black cannot undermine his opponent's centre with c7-c6 and his knight

on b8 cannot occupy the c5-square. The pawn on c5 only creates a target for White to quickly organize active operations on the queenside with the help of the pawn-advances a2-a3 and b2-b4. The most essential defect of the Hromadka System, in compari-

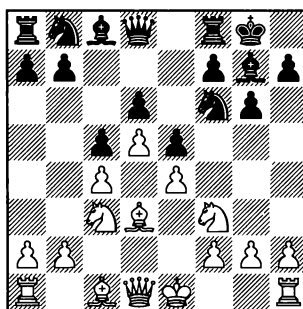
son to the King's Indian, is that Black's dark-squared bishop has no good prospects at all. Admittedly in the King's Indian Defence it is also restricted by the pawn on e5, but it still plays a very important dynamic role in many variations.

Hromadka System

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6 4.♗c3 g6



(Chapter 16),

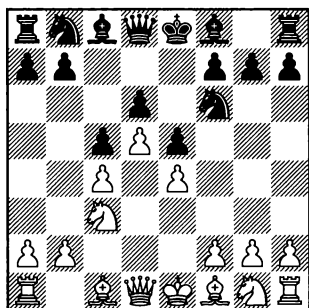


When Black plays the Hromadka System, he may also delay the advance of his e7-pawn – **5.e4 ♗g7 6.♗d3 0–0 7.♗f3**, postponing the clarification of his plans for as long as possible.

Even then, however, he has nothing better after **7...e6 8.h3 exd5 9.cxd5** than to enter lines which we analyse in Chapters 4-14, since after **7...e5**

he obtains positions which are not quite so unfavourable for him as those after **1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♗c3 d6 5.e4 g6** (where we analyse positions with a white knight not on f3, but on e2, which is in White's favour), but are still not at all promising for Black.

Chapter 15 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♘c3 d6 5.e4

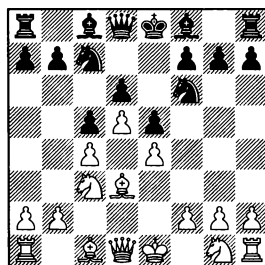


In this chapter we shall analyse in detail **A) 5...♗e7** and **B) 5...♘bd7**, while the move **5...g6** will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The line 5...a6 does not deserve serious attention, because it is too slow and seems illogical; Black's idea of preparing b7-b5 and thus obtaining counterplay is not valid in this pawn structure. With 6.♗d3 White securely prevents his opponent's manoeuvre b7-b5 and strives to deploy his forces similarly to the variations 5...♗e7 6.♗d3, 5...g6 6.♗d3 and 5...♘bd7 6.♗d3, except under even more favourable circumstances, because the move a7-a6

is hardly useful for Black in similar pawn- structures.

5...♘a6 6.♗d3 ♘c7. This idea is used only very seldom and seems rather unconvincing. The knight lacks prospects on c7 and is very passive there. (For 6...♗e7 – see 5...♗e7 6.♗d3 ♘a6; 6...g6 7.♘ge2 ♗g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.f3 – see 5...g6 6.♗d3 ♗g7 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.0-0 ♘a6 9.f3).



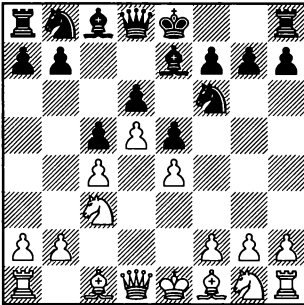
Now White can fight for the advantage with a move which is standard for this pawn structure – 7.a3!?, waiting to see Black's further plan for kingside action and preparing a future b2-b4, for example: 7...♗e7 (7...g6 8.♘ge2 ♗g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.f3±) 8.h3 (it is also possible for White to play

2...c5 3.d5 e5 4.♘c3 d6 5.e4 ♕e7 6.g3

here the immediate 8.♘f3 ♕g4 9.h3 ♕h5 10.g4 ♕g6 11.♘h4 0-0 12.♘f5↑; 11...♕xe4?! 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 13.♘f5±) 8...0-0 9.♘f3±

White can also try to fight for an edge with the more aggressive line: 7.f4!?, with the idea of opening the position in the centre to exploit his lead in development and the time Black has wasted on the rather unfavourable manoeuvre of his knight to the c7-square, for example: 7...exf4 8.♕xf4 g6 9.♘f3 ♕g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.e5↑, or 7...♕e7 8.♘f3 ♘d7 9.fxe5 ♘xe5 10.♘xe5 dxe5 11.0-0 0-0 (11...♕g5?! 12.♖h5±) 12.♕e3± with the plan of ♖d2, a3 and b4.

A) 5...♕e7



This move is played much more often than Black's other possibilities and it is the most typical for the pawn structure of the Czech Benoni. After this Black cannot head for a King's Indian Defence set-up or transpose to any variations of the K.I.D.

White can best fight for the advantage in the diagram position with the moves **A1) 6.g3**, or **A2) 6.♕d3**.

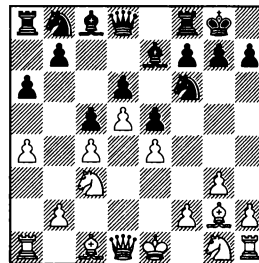
I should like to mention that Black's position after 5...♕e7 is very passive and White is also clearly better after 6.h3 ♘bd7 7.♘f3 ♘f8 8.a3 ♘g6 9.b4± or 6.♘f3 ♕g4 7.♕e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♘e8 9.b3 ♕xf3 10.♕xf3 ♕g5 11.♕b2±

A1) 6.g3

This move is very logical for White when Black's bishop is on e7. White is trying to play in the same way as in the pawn structure of the King's Indian Defence, since in that case, with a white bishop on g2, Black's bishop is much better placed on g7 rather than on the e7-square as it is now.

6...0-0

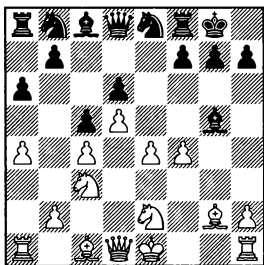
It is more or less the same after 6...a6 7.a4 0-0 8.♕g2 – White has an enduring advantage thanks to his extra space. Black lacks a good plan for deploying his pieces and to organizing meaningful counterplay.



Here are a few examples which

I believe deserve attention:

8...♖e8 9.♗ge2 ♘g5 (or 9...♗d7 10.0-0 ♜b8 11.♙d2 g6 12.a5± ♗g7 13.♗a4 and here, after Black's premature activity 13...h5?! 14.b4 h4 15.♗c1 cxb4 16.♙xb4 ♗c5 17.♗xc5 dxc5 18.♙c3±, White increases his positional advantage, B.Avrukh – T.Pahtz, Bonnevoie 1998) 10.f4 exf4 11.gxf4



11...♙f6 (it is no better for Black to choose 11...♙h4+ 12.♗g3↑ f5?! 13.0-0 fxe4 14.♗cxe4 g6 15.f5!?± gxf5 16.♙h6 ♗g7 17.♙xg7 ♗xg7 18.♜h5 ♙xg3 19.♗xg3 b6 20.♙h3 ♜a7 21.♙xf5 ♙xf5 22.♙xf5 ♗h8 23.♜e1 ♜e7 24.♜e6 ♜xe6 25.dxe6 ♙xf5 26.♗xf5 ♜g8+ 27.♗f2 ♜xe6 28.♜g5 ♜f7 29.♜d8+ ♜g8 30.♜f6+ 1-0 Barsov – Bousios, Patras 2001; 18...fxe4? 19.♙xe4+-) 12.0-0 ♜e7 13.♜d3 ♗d7 14.♗h1 (14.♗g3!? with the idea of sacrificing a pawn after 14...g6 15.e5 dxe5 16.f5±) 14...g6 15.♙d2 ♗g7 16.♜a1± and White's advantage in development and central control is beyond doubt, E.Bacrot – Mataix Arbona, Villarrobledo 2009;

8...♗bd7 9.♗ge2 (it is also good for White to play 9.♗f3 ♗e8

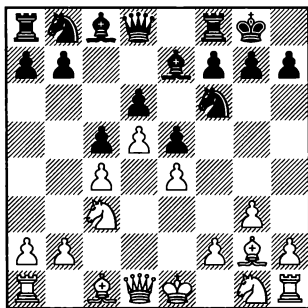
10.0-0 g6 11.♙h6 ♗g7 12.♜d2 and in the game Hort – Ciocaltea, Atnes 1968, his stable positional advantage gradually became decisive after 12...b6 13.♗e1 ♜a7 14.♗d3 f5 15.f4 ♙f6 16.♜a1 exf4 17.♗xf4 ♗e5 18.♗e6 ♙xe6 19.dxe6+-; 12...f5?! 13.exf5 gxf5 14.♗g5±, or 13...♙xf5 14.g4!? ♙f8 15.h3±, planning ♗g5) 9...♗e8 10.0-0 g6 (10...♗c7?! 11.a5 ♜b8 12.b3±; Black cannot solve his problems with 10...♜b8, since in the game I.Sokolov – A.Miles, Sarajevo 1987, White obtained a clear positional advantage: 11.♙e3 b6 12.♗c1 ♗c7 13.♗d3 b5?! 14.cxb5 axb5 15.b4!? bxa4 16.bxc5 dxc5 17.♗xa4±; 15...c4!? 16.♗b2 bxa4 17.♜xa4±; 11.b3±) 11.♙h6 ♗g7 12.♜d2 ♜b8 13.b3 ♗f6 14.h3±; Black has no counterplay whatsoever and White enjoys a stable positional advantage, Iotov – Manolache, Villagarica de Arousa 2005.

The immediate 6...b5, in the style of the Benko Gambit is not at all convincing here, because of the passive position of the dark-squared bishop on the e7-square: 7.cxb5 and in contrast to the positions from the Benko Gambit (1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6), where in reply to 5.bxa6 Black plays 5...e6!? or, after 5...♙xa6 6.♗c3 g6, develops his bishop to an active position, here he has no such counterplay. 7...a6 8.♗f3 0-0 9.♗d2 axb5 10.♗xb5 ♗a6 11.♗c3 ♗c7 12.♗c4 ♙a6

13.♕d3±; White has an extra pawn in addition to his great positional advantage, Portisch – Damjanovic, Monte Carlo 1968.

Black very rarely plays 6... ♖a6, with the idea of ♘c7 – this is very passive, since the knight lacks prospects on the c7-square. 7.♗g2 ♘c7 8.f4!? This is the most energetic line for White (it is also good for him to opt for the quieter move 8.♘f3!?, again retaining a stable positional advantage, for example: 8...a6 9.a4 b6 10.0–0 ♜b8 11.♘e1 b5 12.axb5 axb5 13.b3 0–0 14.♘c2 bxc4 15.bxc4 ♘d7 16.h4± Krasenkow – Blatny, Buenos Aires 1998) 8...exf4 9.♗xf4 0–0 10.♘f3 a6 11.0–0± V.Georgiev – Meessen, Belgium 2011.

7.♗g2

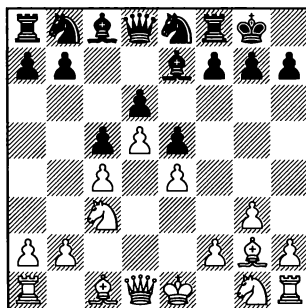


White's extra space provides him with a slight but stable positional edge.

7...♘e8

7...♘bd7 8.♗ge2 (after 8.♘f3, White has to consider the possibility of 8...b5!? 9.cxb5 a6, with a

complicated position, in which Black has some compensation for the pawn. In the game A.Timofeev – Lyaskovsky, Vladivostok 2012, White was reluctant either to capture the pawn with 10.bxa6 ♕a6, with compensation for Black, or defend with the move 10.♗f1!?, but after 10.b6 ♘xb6 11.0–0 a5 12.a4 ♕a6, Black obtained a quite acceptable position; 10...♞xb6 11.0–0 a5=) 8...a6 9.a4 ♜b8 10.0–0 ♘e8 11.a5 (11.b3±) 11...b5 12.axb6 ♞xb6 13.♞a3 g6 14.b3± with the plan of ♕d2 and ♘c1-d3, E.Magerramov – B. Bilunov, Podolsk 1989.



8.♗ge2

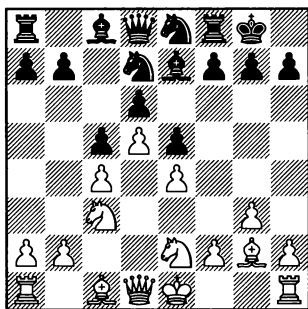
White's advantage is overwhelming after 8.♘f3 ♘d7 9.0–0 g6 10.♗h6 ♗g7 11.♞d2 ♘f6 12.h3 ♘h8 13.a3!?↑ with the idea b4, but with a white knight on f3, instead of playing 8...♘d7 Black has at his disposal a much more interesting possibility: 8...f5!?, after which, in variations such as 9.exf5 ♗xf5 10.0–0, or 9.0–0 fxe4 10.♘xe4 ♗f5, White has a slight edge but it is difficult to tell whether he

will be able to obtain anything more than that.

8...♖d7

Now after 8...f5, White can continue with 9.0-0 fxe4 (9...g6?! 10.♙h6 ♜f7 11.f4 ♖d7 12.♜c2±; 10...♗g7 11.f4↑) 10.♜xe4 ♙f5 11.♜2c3± and he maintains a stable advantage, Dely – Gasztony, Hungary 1973.

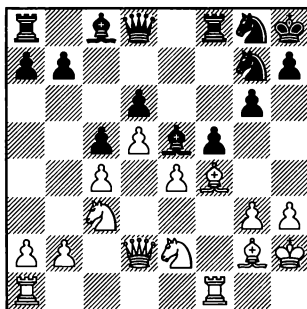
8...♙g5 9.f4 exf4 10.gxf4 ♙h4+ (Black's relatively best line here is 10...♙f6, but even then after 11.0-0 ♖d7 12.♜d3, or 11...♜e7 12.♜d3, with the idea of ♙d2 and ♜ae1, White preserves a slight but stable edge.) 11.♜g3 f5?! 12.0-0 fxe4 13.♜cxe4↑ g6 14.b3 ♖d7 15.♙b2 h6? 16.♜d3 ♜h7 17.♜ae1+- I.Zakharevich – Gubajdullin, Belgorod 2008.



9.0-0 g6 10.♙h6 ♗g7 11.♜d2 ♖f6 12.h3!? ♜h8 13.♜h2

It is also possible to continue with 13.a3, with the idea of 13...♗g8 14.♙e3 f5 15.f4 ♙f6 16.fxe5 ♙xe5 17.♙f4±

13...♗g8 14.♙e3 f5 15.f4 ♙f6 16.fxe5 ♙xe5 17.♙f4

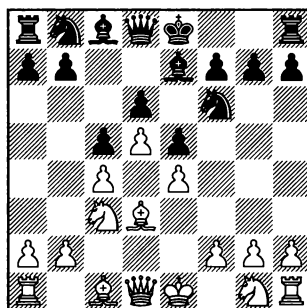


17...♙xf4

It is no better for Black to play 17...♜e8 18.♜ae1 ♖f6 19.♙xe5 ♜xe5 20.♖f4 (planning ♖d3) 20...♜e7 21.exf5 ♙xf5 22.♖e6 (22.g4!+- with the idea of 22...♙d7 23.♖e4 ♖xe4 24.♖xg6+ hxg6 25.♜h6+ ♜g8 26.♙xe4+-) 22...♙xe6 23.dxe6 ♜xe6 24.♜xe6 ♖xe6 25.♖b5+- I.Zakharevich – A.Fedorov, Ekaterinburg 1997.

18.♖xf4 ♖f6 19.♜ae1 fxe4 20.♖xe4 ♖xe4 21.♙xe4± followed by ♖xg6 and ♜h6+- Magerramov – Serebrjanik, Moscow 1991.

A2) 6.♙d3



This is White's most flexible

2...c5 3.d5 e5 4.♖c3 d6 5.e4 ♕e7 6.♗d3

move. He delays determining the position of his king's knight and waits to see what plan Black chooses. For example, after 6...0-0, it would be good for White to play 7.h3, or 7.♖f3!? (7.♗e2 ♖h5!?∞), while if 6...♗bd7 (with the idea of answering 7.♖f3 with 7...♗f8 8.0-0 ♗g6, reaching a very complex position in which White's prospects are still slightly preferable.) he can continue with 7.♗e2!?± and now the manoeuvre 7...♗f8 is not so good in view of 8.♗g3 ♗g6 9.♗f5, with an obvious positional advantage to White.

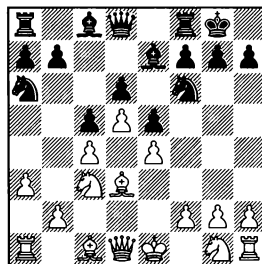
6...0-0

For 6...♗bd7 7.♗e2 – see 5...♗bd7 6.♗d3 ♕e7 7.♗e2.

It seems rather anti-positional for Black to play 6...♗g4?! 7.♗e2 (it is also good to play 7.f3±) 7...♗h5 (7...♗xe2 8.♖xe2± leads to a passive and prospectless position for Black; without his light-squared bishop he has no active counterplay, because he cannot prepare either of the thematic pawn-breaks in this pawn structure – f7-f5 or b7-b5; White must just be careful not to allow the exchange of the dark-squared bishops with the manoeuvre ♕e7-g5; then his plan is quite standard: complete his development and prepare g2-g3 and f2-f4, or a2-a3 and b2-b4, increasing his space advantage and seizing the initia-

tive.) 8.h3 ♕xe2 (8...♗c8 9.g4 ♖f6 10.♗g3↑) 9.♖xe2 ♖f4 (9...g6 10.♖g4↑) 10.♗xf4 exf4 11.e5± and White maintains not only a positional advantage but long-lasting initiative as well.

6...♗a6 – This move looks too passive. The simplest reply for White would be 7.a3!?, not so much with the aim of preventing ♗b4, but preparing the future pawn advance b2-b4. 7...0-0 (7...♗c7 8.b4±)

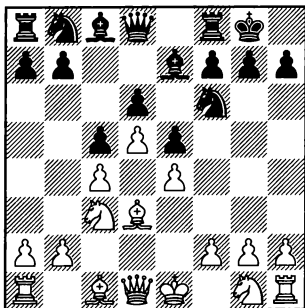


After 8.♗e2 ♖h5!?, Black has some active possibilities based on the standard manoeuvre ♕e7-g5, exchanging the dark-squared bishops.

It is possible for White to play 8.♖f3!?, not fearing the pin 8...♗g4 9.h3 ♕h5 10.g4 ♗g6 11.♖h4, with the idea of ♖f5, after which his stable positional advantage would be further increased. Black's attempt to simplify the position with 11...♗xe4?! backfires after 12.♖xe4 ♖xe4 13.♖f5 ♖f6 14.g5 ♖e8 15.♖g4 g6 16.h4!→, or 15...♗h8 16.h4→ and in both cases his position looks defenceless; the line 9...♗xf3 10.♖xf3± leads to a

position without any decent prospects for Black in which he completely lacks any counterplay.

8.h3 ♖e8 (8...♗c7 9.b4↑ 9.♗f3± White's positional advantage is quite clear and it even increases after 9...g6 10.♗h6 ♖g7 11.♗d2, or 11.g4.



7.♗f3!?

This move is not played as often as 7.h3, but it seems more flexible, since White has no need to fear the threat of ♗g4, as we shall see later, while the move 7.h3 might well turn out to be superfluous or unnecessarily passive in some variations.

For example, after 7.h3 ♖bd7 8.♗f3 (the line: 8.♗ge2 ♖e8!?, with the idea of ♗e7-g5, provides Black with a quite acceptable position) 8...♗h5 9.♗e2 g6 10.g4 ♖g7 11.♗g3 ♗f6 12.♗h6 ♗h8 13.♗d2 ♖g8∞ and there arose a complicated position in which Black's prospects were not at all worse I. Farago – G.Brostrom, Harrachov 1967.

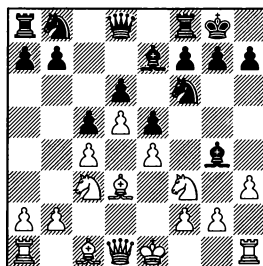
Black also obtains an easy game without too many problems

after 7.♗ge2 ♗h5, with the idea of ♗e7-g5: 8.♗g3 (8.0–0 ♗g5 leads to a balanced position, since the exchange of the dark-squared bishops is almost always in Black's favour in such pawn structures) 8...♗f4 9.♗xf4 (9.0–0 ♗g5=) 9...exf4 10.♗h5 ♗g5 11.g3 f5. The game Pfleger – F.Gheorghiu, Hastings 1964, continued 12.exf5 (12.gxf4 fxe4= 13.♗xe4 ♗xf4 14.♗d3?! ♗h4 15.♗xh7+ ♗h8 16.♗g6 ♖d7 17.♗xf4 ♖e5 18.♗g3 ♗xf4 19.♗xh4+ ♗xh4 20.♗e4± Iotov – Manolache, Peabody 2005; 16...♗e5±) 12...♗xf5 13.♗xf5 ♗xf5 14.♗g4 g6 15.gxf4 ♗h6 16.♗g3 ♗xf4 17.♗e6+ ♗h8 18.0–0 ♗a6 (18...♖d7!?) 19.♖ce4 ♗f8 and in view of the threat of ♖c7, Black's prospects seem to be at least equal.

7...♖bd7

This is his most popular reply.

Black does achieve much with 7...♗g4 8.h3



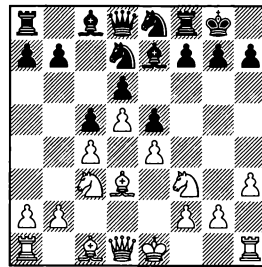
8...♗h5 (it is simply bad for him to play 8...♗xf3 9.♗xf3 since the absence of the light-squared bishop deprives him of any chance of creating active counterplay, for

2...c5 3.d5 e5 4.♟c3 d6 5.e4 ♞e7 6.♞d3

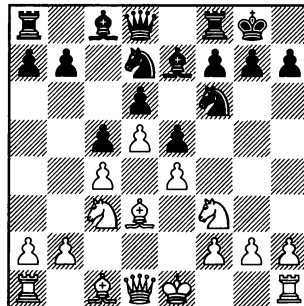
which in this pawn structure he must prepare either b5 or f5, which are almost impossible. Here we should briefly discuss the question of the so-called “bad bishops” – White’s on d3 and Black’s on e7. The pawn centre is blocked and these bishops are restricted by their own pawn chains. Black’s bishop on e7 is passive and is a typical example of a “bad bishop”. However, this is not the case with White’s bishop on d3. Although it is restricted by the pawns on c4 and e4 it cannot be termed as “bad”, since it hinders Black’s potential counterplay in such pawn structures based on the pawn-breaks b7-b5 and f7-f5. The game Ghitescu – Onat, Pernik 1976, continued 9...♞e8, with the now familiar idea of ♞e7-g5, 10. h4! ♞d7 11.g3±, creating a position in which Black is very passive and with no chance of creating counterplay.) 9.g4 ♞g6 10.♞h4↑, with the plan of ♞f5, and now it would be too risky for Black to continue with 10...♞xe4 11.♞xe4 ♞xe4 12.♞f5 ♞f6 13.g5 ♞e8 (13... ♞fd7? 14.♞h5 g6 15.♞h6+–) 14.h4↑ since White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn and excellent attacking prospects against Black’s king, for example: 14...g6 15.♞f3→

After 7...♞e8, in his fight for the opening advantage White has tried 8.h3 (it would also be interesting to try the scarcely analysed

move 8.a3, with the idea of 8... ♞g4 9.b4 ♞d7 10.0–0 ♞xf3 11. ♞xf3 ♞g5 12.♞b2±, or 10...a5 11. bxa5 ♞xa5 12.♞d2±, maintaining a slight but stable positional edge. White has a powerful initiative after 8...g6 9.♞h6 ♞g7 10.♞d2 ♞d7 11.b4↑) 8...♞d7 (8...g6 9.♞h6 ♞g7 10.♞d2 ♞d7 11.a3±; 10...f5 11. ♞g5!? f4 12.h4↑)



9.a3. This quiet positional move, planning active play later on the queenside with b2-b4, maintains a stable positional advantage for White. Here, after the standard move for these pawn structures – 9...g6, it seems very good continue with 10.♞h6 ♞g7 11.♞d2, exerting powerful pressure after 11...♞f6 12.b4↑ or 11...f5 12.♞g5↑



8.0-0!?

White is trying to manage without the move h2-h3 and plans to continue with quick action on the queenside with a2-a3 and b2-b4.

8...♖h5

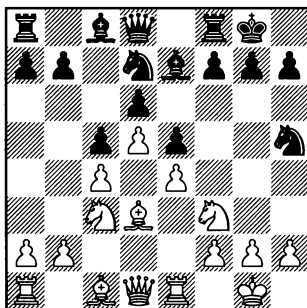
It is no better for Black to play here 8...♖e8 9.a3 g6 10.♗h6 ♘g7 11.♜d2, with the idea of b2-b4↑, while Black's active play on the kingside with 11...f5?! 12.♘g5± will weaken his position even more.

It would be fruitless for him to play 8...a6, since he is unlikely to be able to manage to advance with b7-b5, while after 9.a3, White will easily push b2-b4 and Black will be unable to prevent his opponent's queenside offensive. The game Piket – MacFarlane, Oakham 1986, continued with 9...♖e8 10.b4 b6 11.♞b1 g6 12.♗h6 ♘g7 13.♜d2 ♖f6 14.h3↑; White has a considerable space advantage and excellent prospects of seizing the initiative. For example, he plans to increase his queenside pressure after exchanging pawns on c5 and doubling the rooks on the b-file. Meanwhile, Black will find it difficult to create any meaningful counterplay on the kingside.

9.♞e1!?

(diagram)

The position arising is obviously more pleasant for White.



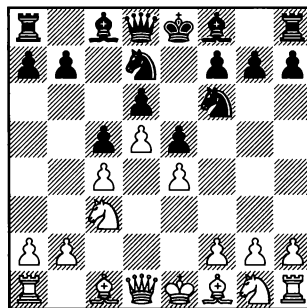
After ♖f4, he has prepared the f1-square for the retreat of his bishop from d3 and he plans to increase his pressure on the queenside in the now familiar manner: a2-a3 and b2-b4. As usual, Black has great problems organizing active counterplay.

9...g6

Or 9...♖f4 10.♗f1 g6 11.a3↑ f5?! 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♗xf4 exf4 14.♜d2±

10.♗h6 ♘g7 (10...♞e8 11.♜d2±) 11.♜d2± White has a considerable space advantage and excellent prospects of pursuing his initiative on the queenside.

B) 5...♖bd7



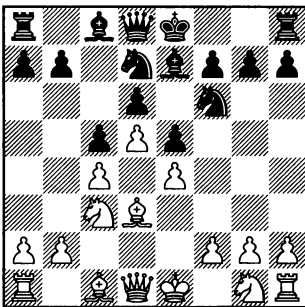
2...c5 3.d5 e5 4.♖c3 d6 5.e4 ♜bd7 6.♙d3

The idea of this move is to postpone the development of the dark-squared bishop and to see what set-up White chooses. If he continues with the 6.g3 plan, which is very good for him if his opponent plays ...♙e7, then Black can respond with 6...g6 7.♙g2 ♙g7 8.♜ge2 0-0 9.0-0 reaching a King's Indian Defence position under quite acceptable circumstances.

6.♙d3 ♙e7

Or 6...g6 7.♜ge2 – see 5...g6.

Black should abstain from the waiting move 6...a6, for example: 7.♜ge2 ♞b8 8.a3!? – White is preparing a queenside attack with b2-b4 and it will be very difficult for Black to counter this with b7-b5. A possible continuation is 8...♙e7 (White's idea to postpone castling on move 8 is justified in the variation 8...♜h5 9.g4!? ♜hf6 10.♜g3↑) 9.♜g3 h5 10.♜f5 ♙f8 11.♙g5 g6 12.♜e3 ♙e7 13.h4± Seethuraman – Pountzas, Istmia 2012.



7.♜ge2

After 7.♜f3 ♜f8!?, with the

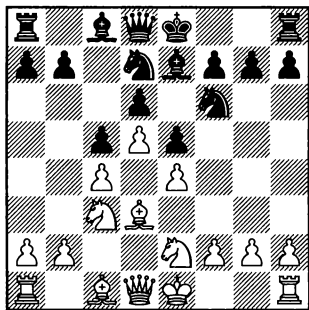
idea of ♜g6 (for 7...0-0 8.0-0 – see 5...♙e7), we reach very complicated positions in which White, thanks to his extra space, maintains a slight advantage but no more than that. Here are a few examples illustrating how complex the position is: 8.h3 (8.a3 ♜g6 9.g3 h6 10.h4 ♙g4 11.♙e2 ♞c8 12.♜h2 ♙d7 13.♜f1 ♙d8 14.♞d3 ♙a5 15.♙d2 a6= V.Lazarev – A.Kogan, Montreal 2000) 8...♙d7 (8...h5 9.♙e3 h4 10.♞d2 ♜g6 11.0-0-0 ♙d7 12.♞b1 a6 13.♞c2 ♜h5!? 14.♜e2 b5± J.Lautier – Seirawan, Wijk aan Zee 1991; 11.0-0!?; 8...♜g6 9.0-0 h5 10.♞b1 h4 11.b4 cxb4 12.♞xb4 ♜d7 13.♙c2 0-0 14.♜e2 ♜c5 15.♙e3 b6= Timoschenko – F.Georghiu, Biel 1994) 9.♞e2 a6 10.♙e3 ♜g6 11.♜d2 h5 12.a3 h4 13.♜f3 ♜h5= Ghitescu – T.V.Petrosian, Zagreb 1970.

Equally complicated positions arise after 7.h3 ♜f8!? 8.g3 ♜g6 9.h4 a6 10.h5 ♜f8 11.f4 h6∞ Al-Sayed – I.Efimov, Katar-Moniko 2010, or 7.♙e3 ♜f8 8.f3 ♜h5 9.♞d2 h6 10.♙c2 (10.♜ge2 ♙g5=) 10...♙g5 11.♙a4+ ♜d7 12.♜ge2 a6∞ Grycel – Dziuba, Lubniewice 2002.

(diagram)

7...0-0

Here, the manoeuvre 7...♜f8 is not longer so promising for Black, for example: 8.♜g3 ♜g6 9.♜f5 – White's powerful knight on f5

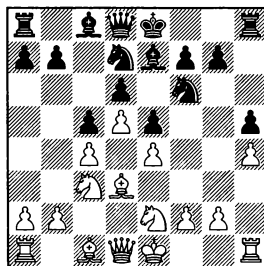


guarantees him a stable positional advantage. A possible continuation is 9...0-0 (it would be too anti-positional for Black to try 9... ♟xf5?! 10. exf5 ♞f8 11. 0-0 ♞8d7 12. ♞e1↑, or 10... ♞f4 11. ♟f1± g6?! 12. g3 ♞4h5 13. g4 ♞f4 14. g5 ♞6h5 15. f6 ♟f8 16. ♞a4+ ♞d7 17. ♞xd7+ ♞xd7 18. ♟e3+-) 10. g3 ♞e8 11. ♞f3 h6 12. h4 ♟f8 13. ♟e3↑ S. Atalik – Abdul Wahab, Moscow 1994.

7... ♞h5 8. g4 ♞hf6 (Black's compensation for the pawn is insufficient after 8... ♞f4 9. ♞xf4 exf4 10. ♟xf4±) 9. ♞g3 g6 10. ♟h6 (10. h4!? with the idea of 10... h5 11. g5 ♞h7 12. ♟d2 0-0 13. ♞e2 a6 14. 0-0-0↑; 12... f6?! 13. ♞xh5!±) 10... ♟f8 11. ♟e3 h5 12. g5 h4 13. ♞ge2 ♞h5 14. ♞g1± Vallejo Pons – A. Graf, Benidorm 2003.

7... h5 8. h4!? – This move radically prevents Black's kingside counterplay based on the manoeuvre h5-h4, followed by ♞f6-h5. The position arising should be evaluated as better for White, since his space advantage enables him to retain the initiative on the

queenside with the help of the moves a2-a3 and b2-b4, whereas Black has great problems creating any active counterplay.

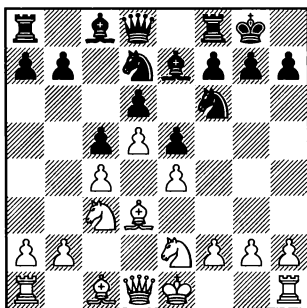


Here are a few instructive examples: 8... a6 (8... ♞h7 9. g3 a6 10. ♟e3 ♞hf6 11. f3 ♞b8 12. ♞d2 ♞c7 13. b3 ♞f8 14. a3 ♞g6 15. b4 b6 16. ♞b1 0-0 17. ♞f2 ♞h7 18. ♞g2 ♟d7 19. ♞b2 ♞c8 20. ♟f2 ♟d8 21. bxc5 bxc5 22. ♞xb8 ♞xb8 23. ♞b1 ♞c7 24. ♞d1 f5 25. exf5 ♟xf5 26. ♟xf5 ♞xf5 27. ♞d3± Di Berardino – De Nucci, Campinas 2011) 9. f3 (9. g3 ♞f8 10. f3 ♞g6 11. a3 0-0 12. ♟e3 ♞c7 13. b4 b6 14. ♞d2 ♟d7 15. ♞f2 ♞fb8 16. ♞ab1 ♞a7 17. ♞b2 ♞ab7 18. ♞hb1± G. Vescovi – D. Lima, Porto Alegre 2008. Black has practically no active counterplay and must remain completely passive. White can manoeuvre freely and regroup his forces on both sides of the board) 9... ♞f8 10. ♟e3 ♟d7 11. a3 ♞g6 12. g3 a5?! This positional blunder weakens the b5-square. 13. ♞b5 ♟xb5?! The exchange of Black's light-squared bishop for White's knight is a great positional mistake in such pawn structures and deprives Black of any counterplay. 14. cxb5

2...c5 3.d5 e5 4.♖c3 d6 5.e4 ♜bd7 6.♗d3

b6 15.♖c3 ♜d7 16.b3 ♗f6 17.♞d2
♞e7 18.♞c1 ♜gf8 19. ♗f1 ♞g8 20.
♜d1 ♞d8 21.♜b2 ♞h8 22.♗h3
♞b8 23.♖c4+– White's pieces are
totally dominant all over the en-
tire board, R.Leitao – De Nucci,
Campinas 2011.

7...g6 8.h4!? White is trying to
transpose to variations and pawn
structures we have already ana-
lyzed (7...h5 8.h4!?). 8...h5 (It is
no better for Black to play 8...0–0
9.♗h6 ♞e8 10.♜g3↑ with the idea
of ♞d2 and h5, or 8...♜h5 9.g4
♜g7 10.h5↑; 9...♜f4 10.♜xf4 exf4
11.♗xf4± ♗xh4?! 12.♜b5 ♜e5 13.
♞xh4 a6 14.♜xd6+ ♞xd6 15.♗g3±)
9.g3 ♜f8 10.f3 ♜g7 11.♗e3 ♜e8
12.♞d2 ♜c7 13.a3 ♜a6 14.♞b1 and
Black has no counterplay at all,
Wojtaszek – J.Lopes Martines,
Sun Juan 2010.



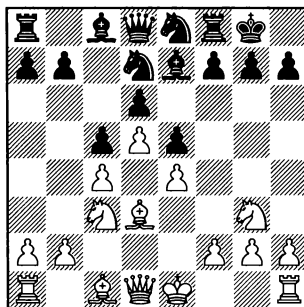
8.♜g3!?

White should not be in a hurry
to castle kingside, because after
8.0–0 ♜e8, Black will have the
chance to prepare the favourable
exchange of the dark-squared
bishops with ♗g5.

8...♜e8

Black is threatening to ex-
change the dark-squared bishops
with ♗g5, compensating some-
what for the effects of his lack of
space.

White is better after 8...♞e8 9.
♜f5, or 8...g6 9.♗h6 ♞e8 10.h4.



9.h4!?

This move is simple and
strong. White prevents the ma-
noeuvre ♗g5, restricts Black's
counterplay and maintains his
space advantage, with excellent
prospects of developing his initia-
tive later.

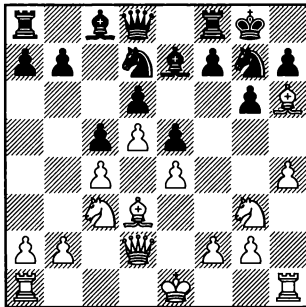
9...g6

White has powerful positional
pressure following 9...♜c7 10.♜f5
♜f6 11.g4±

10.♗h6

White has only a slight posi-
tional advantage after the non-
standard line: 10.♞d2 h5 11.♜f1
♜g7 (11...♗xh4 12.g4 hxg4 13.♞h6
g5 14.♜e3 – with the idea of ♜g2xh4
– 14...♞f6 15.♜xg4 ♞g7 16.♞xh4
gxh4 17.♞xh4; 15...♞xh6 16.♜xh6
♜h7 17.♜f5±) 12.g3 a6 13.♞c2±
Zhao Xue – Gong, Qianyun 2012.

10...♘g7 11.♚d2



11...♙xh4

If Black declines the pawn-sacrifice with 11...♘f6 12.f3 or 11...♙e8 12.h5, in both cases he ends up in a passive position with no counterplay.

12.♘b5 (12.0-0-0!? ♖ planning ♖h2 and ♖dh1) 12...♚e7 (12...♙e7?! 13.♘xd6±) 13.♘xd6 ♙xg3 14.♘xc8 ♖fxc8 15.fxg3± White has more than enough compensation for the pawn.

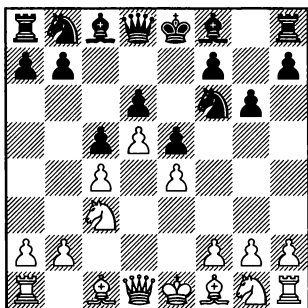
Chapter 16

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.♘c3 d6
5.e4 g6
Czech Benoni**

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6 4.♘c3 g6
Hromadka System**

In this chapter we shall analyse in detail set-ups in which Black fianchettoes his dark-squared bishop but refrains from the move e7-e6.

**A) 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5
4.♘c3 d6 5.e4 g6**



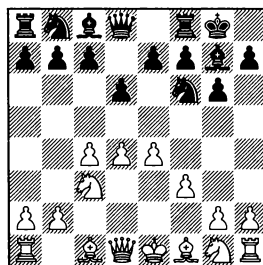
Black sets up a King's Indian pawn-structure but with an early c7-c5. The best way for White to exploit the defects of this set-up is to opt for the Saemisch system, but under much more favourable circumstances than usual, as we will soon see.

6.♙d3!?

White wants to continue his development following the

scheme: ♘ge2, 0-0, f3, ♙e3, ♗d2 and with his bishop already on d3 this should provide him with a stable and considerable positional advantage.

The point is that in the classical treatment of the Saemisch system after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0,

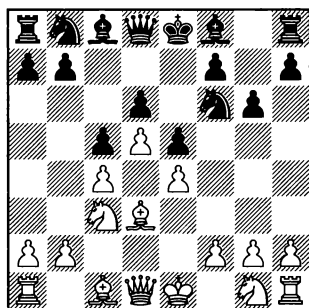


White cannot comfortably develop his bishop on d3 followed by ♘ge2 (which would be very desirable...) because after 6.♙d3, owing to White's reduced control over the key d4-square, Black can organize counterplay with 6...c5!? 7.d5 e6 8.♘ge2 exd5 9.cxd5, reaching a well-known position in which Black's chances are no worse. Therefore, in the classical Saemisch system, White is obliged

to play either 6.♖ge2, leaving his bishop on f1 and developing his kingside only later, or 6.♗e3, postponing his plan of reaching the most favourable set-up (♗d3 and ♖ge2), but in that case Black has other possibilities of creating significant counterplay: 6...c5!? 7.dxc5 dxc5 8.♖d8 ♜d8 9.♗xc5 ♖c6, 6...♖c6!? planning to answer 7.♗d3 with 7...e5!=, or 6...a6!? with the idea of 7.♗d3 ♖fd7 (7...c5!?∞) 8.♖ge2 c5 9.d5 ♖e5, or 9...b5!?

There are some other lines in the King's Indian Defence in which White also has problems placing his bishop comfortably on d3 (where it is a bit more active than on e2), for example: 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♖c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗d3 ♖c6 6.♖ge2 e5 7.d5 ♖c6-d4!?

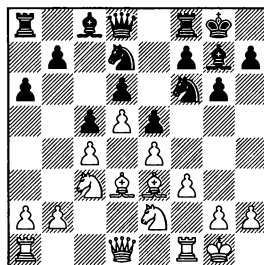
In this particular case, however, Black does not have any possibility of organizing active counterplay against the white set-up of 6.♗d3 followed by ♖ge2.



6...♗g7

It is no better for Black to play 6...a6 – this move seems too slow

and not very logical, since it will be very difficult for him to advance b7-b5 advantageously under these circumstances. In this variation, White will simply continue with his development according to his standard scheme, aiming for a very good version of the K.I.D. Saemisch set-up: 7.♖ge2 ♗g7 8.0–0 0–0 9.f3 ♖bd7 10.♗e3±

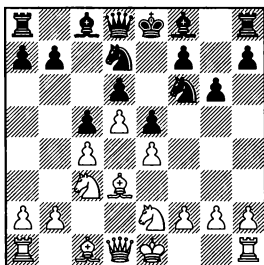


White has a space advantage, which provides him with good prospects of developing a queenside initiative, whereas Black has no active counterplay anywhere in sight. The attempt to organize the standard f7-f5 advance backfires on him: 10...♖h5 11.a3 f5?! 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♖c2± with the idea of 13...♖f6 14.g4±, or 10...♖e8 11.a3 f5?! 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♖c2 ♖f6 14.♖g3±. If Black plays passively with 10...♖b8 White can immediately seize the initiative on the queenside with 11.a3!?, with the plan of b2-b4 and ♖b1, while Black has absolutely no counterplay on the kingside.

6...♖bd7 7.♖ge2 (here it is possible for White to try 7.f3!?,

2...c5 3.d5 e5 4.♟c3 d6 5.e4 g6 6.♙d3

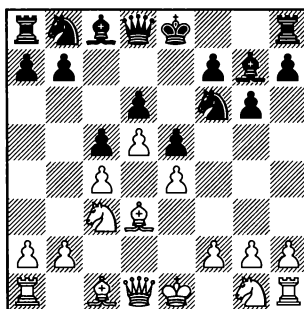
practically forcing Black, after 7...♙g7 8.♟ge2 0-0 9.0-0, to trans-
pose to the main line of the 5...g6
variation, because the alternative
7...h5 weakens the g5-square too
much, which White can exploit
with 8.♟h3!?±)



7...h5!? Black prepares ♙h6,
exchanging the dark-squared
bishops, but this plan is not very
natural and, more importantly, it
is too slow (there are no inde-
pendent lines after 7...♙g7 8.0-0
0-0 9.f3 – see 6...♙g7) 8.0-0 a6
(White develops a strong initia-
tive in the centre and on the king-
side after 8...♙h6 9.♙xh6 ♖xh6 10.
♞d2 ♜h8 11.♟b5 ♜e7 12.f4 a6 13.
♟bc3↑) 9.h3 ♙h6 10.♙xh6 ♖xh6
11.♞d2 ♜h8 12.a3 ♜f8 13.b4↑ and
Black will pay dearly for the time
he has lost, Van Scheltinga –
Larsen, Amsterdam 1964.

Black only rarely plays 6...h5
(with the idea of ♙h6), which
seems too simplistic and weakens
the g5-square. White can exploit
this by playing 7.♟f3!?, for exam-
ple: 7...♙g4 (White's plan is seen
in the variation 7...♙h6 8.♙xh6
♖xh6 9.♞d2 ♜h8 10.♟g5±) 8.

♞a4+ ♟bd7?! (it is only slightly
better to continue with 8...♞d7
9.♟b5 ♙xf3 10.gxf3 ♟a6 11.f4↑.)
9.♟g5! h4 10.f3 ♙h5 11.g4 hxg3
12.hxg3+– Campos Moreno –
Gonzalez Rodriguez, Montcuda
1999.



7.♟ge2

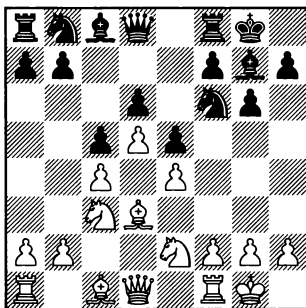
This is the most fashionable
move now for White to try to
maintain a substantial opening
advantage.

This is possibly even stronger
than 7.♟f3 0-0 8.0-0, which is
also playable for White and will
be covered via the move order 1.
d4 ♟f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6.

7...0-0 8.0-0

It is less advisable for White to
postpone castling kingside with
8.f3 (with the plan of ♙e3, ♞d2),
retaining the option of castling
queenside in some variations, be-
cause this offers Black greater
possibilities of organizing coun-
terplay, for example: 8...♟e8!?
9.♙e3 ♙h6 10.♞d2 ♙xe3 11.♞xe3

♖h4+ 12.g3 ♖h3 13.♟d1 ♔g7 14. ♟f2 ♖h6 15.♟d2 ♖xe3+ 16.♟xe3= White's space advantage is rather symbolic in this position and Black should be able to survive, O'Kelly – Ulvestad, Malaga 1966, or 8...♟a6 9.♙e3 ♟c7 10.♖d2 a6 with a very complicated position in which White's prospects seem to be slightly better, but castling queenside is now out of the question – 11.0–0–0?! b5!♞



8...♟h5

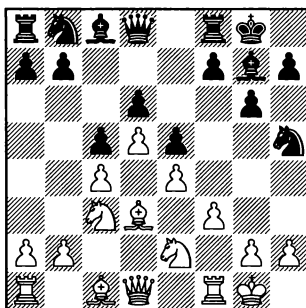
8...♟a6 9.f3! h5 (9...♟h5 10. ♙e3 – see 8...♟h5; 9...♟b4 10.♙b1 ♟h5 11.a3 ♖a5 12.♙d2±; 9...♟e8 10.a3↑ f5?! 11.exf5 and White is better after 11...gxf5 12.♖c2 ♖h4 13.♟g3±, or 11...♙xf5 12.♟g3±) 10.♙g5 ♖e8 11.♟b5 ♟h7 12.♙h4 ♖d7 13.♖d2 ♟c7 14.b4 ♟a6 15. a3↑ f5? 16.exf5 gxf5 17.♟g3+– Leitao – D.Pacheco, Buenos Aires 2005.

8...♟bd7 9.f3 ♟e8 10.♙e3± with the plan of a3, b4, ♖d2. 10... f5?! 11.exf5 gxf5 12.♖c2 ♖f6 13. ♟g3±

8...♟e8 9.♙e3!? (9.f3 ♖h4 10. ♙e3 ♙h6 11.♙f2 ♖e7 12.a3±) 9... ♟d7 (9...f5?! 10.exf5 gxf5 11.f3±; 10...♙xf5 11.♟g3 ♙xd3 12.♖xd3 ♟d7 13.a3↑) 10.f3±

9.f3!?

With this useful prophylactic move White prepares to counter his opponent's thematic move in such positions – f7–f5.

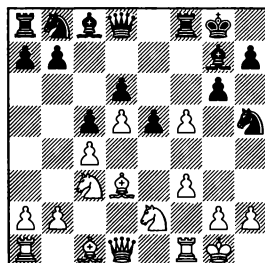


9...♟a6

Black is forced to stick to a waiting strategy.

9...♟d7 10.♙e3 a6 11.a3± – this position is too passive for Black. White has a clear-cut plan to develop his queenside initiative with the move b2–b4.

9...f5?! – this activity rebounds on Black: 10.exf5

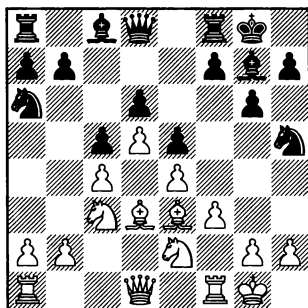


2...c5 3.d5 d6 4.♖c3 g6 5.e4 ♕g7 6.♗d3

10...♗xf5?! 11.♗xf5 gxf5 12.g4!
 ♖f6 (12...fxg4 13.fxg4 ♖f4 14.
 ♖xf4 exf4 15.♗xf4±; 13...♖f6 14.
 ♖g3±; 13...♗xf1+ 14.♗xf1 ♖f6 15.
 g5 ♖e8 16.♖g3+–) 13.gxf5±

10...gxf5 11.♗e3 ♖a6 (11...
 ♖d7?! 12.♗c2 ♗f6 13.g4!?±) 12.a3
 ♖c7 13.♗c2± with ideas of b4 or
 g4.

10.♗e3



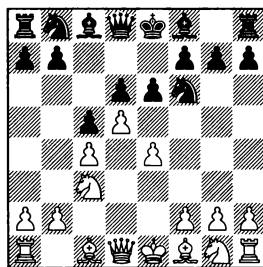
10...♖c7

Here, once again, Black does not achieve anything with the pseudo-active 10...f5?! – 11.exf5 gxf5 (11...♗xf5 12.♗xf5 gxf5 and with 13.g4!?, White gains a clear positional advantage after 13... ♖f6 14.gxf5 ♖h5 15.♖g3 ♖xg3 16.hxg3 ♗xf5 17.♖e4±, or 13...f4 14.♗f2 ♖f6 15.g5 ♖h5 16.♖e4±) 12.a3!?± with the plan of ♗d2, ♗ab1 and b2-b4↑ and Black is doomed to passive defence.

11.a3 ♗e7 12.♗c2±

**B) 1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 d6
 4.♖c3 g6**

4...e6 5.e4 and now:



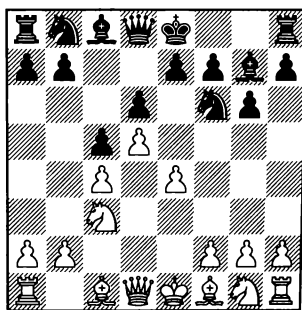
5...♗e7 6.♖f3 exd5 7.cxd5 –
 see Chapter 1, variation **B2c**, 6...
 ♗e7 7.e4;

5...♖bd7 6.♖f3 exd5 7.cxd5 –
 see Chapter 1, variation **B2e**;

5...g6 6.♖f3 – see Chapter 1,
 variation **A**;

5...exd5 6.cxd5 g6 7.♗d3 ♕g7
 8.h3 0–0 9.♖f3 – see Chapters
 4–14.

5.e4 ♕g7



6.♗d3

This is White's most precise order of moves, reducing his opponent's possibilities as much as possible, whereas 6.♖f3 allows Black to play 6...♗g4.

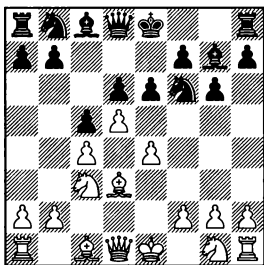
6...0–0

6...a6 7.a4 – the inclusion of these moves changes very little, regardless of move orders or transpositions; in fact it merely reduces Black's own possibilities, since he loses the opportunity to enter the most fashionable variations of the Modern Benoni, which we analyse in Part 2 with the move 9...b5.

6...♖a6 7.♖f3 0-0 8.0-0, or 6...♖bd7 7.♖f3 0-0 8.0-0 – see 6...0-0.

After 6...e5, White is faced with a choice of where to develop his knight: 7.♖ge2 – see variation A, or 7.♖f3 0-0 8.0-0 – see 6...0-0.

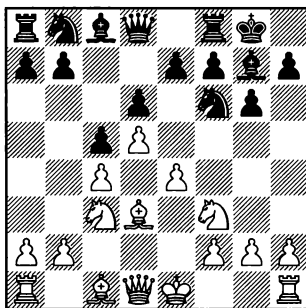
6...e6



7.h3!? (it is less accurate for White to play 7.♖f3?!, in view of 7...exd5 8.cxd5 a6 9.a4 ♖g4 – see Chapter 2, variation A1.) 7...exd5 (7...0-0 8.♖f3, or 7...a6 8.a4 0-0 9.♖f3 – see Chapter 1, variation A; 7...♖a6 8.♖f3 0-0 9.0-0 – see Chapter 1, variation A2) 8.cxd5 a6 (8...0-0 9.♖f3 – see Chapters 4-14) 9.a4 ♖bd7 (9...0-0 10.♖f3

– see Chapters 7-8) 10.♖f3 ♖h5 (10...0-0 11.0-0 – see Chapter 8) 11.♖g5 (White should not allow 11.0-0 ♖e5 12.♖e2 ♖xf3+ 13.♖xf3 ♖h4.) 11...♖f6 (11...♖c7 12.0-0 0-0 13.a5 – see Chapters 8, variation D) 12.♖e3 0-0 13.♖e2 – see Chapter 7, variation C.

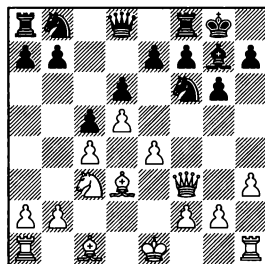
7.♖f3



7...e5

7...e6 8.h3 – see Chapter 1, variation A (8...exd5 9.cxd5 – see Chapters 4-14).

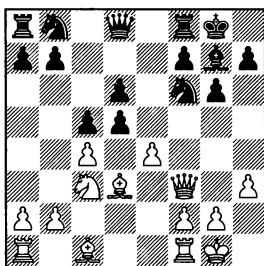
7...♖g4 8.h3 ♖xf3 9.♖xf3



Black's position is very passive without his good light-squared bishop. He has no decent pros-

2...c5 3.d5 d6 4.♖c3 g6 5.e4 ♗g7 6.♗d3

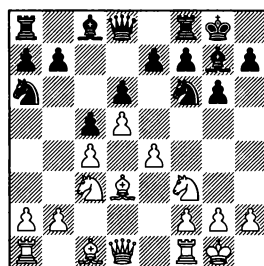
pects of creating active counterplay, which in such pawn-structures is usually based on advancing b7-b5. Now it is almost impossible to prepare b7-b5, because White has secure control of the b5-square. 9...e6 (the essence of the position remains the same after 9...♖bd7 10.♗d1!?± with the idea of 10...♖e5 11.♗e2± and Black's position is very passive and prospectless with his light-squared bishop absent from the board.) 10.0-0 exd5



11.exd5! (this is an important moment; White should recapture on d5 with his e-pawn, so that his c-pawn still controls the b5-square; after 11.cxd5 ♖bd7, or 11...a6!? 12.a4 ♖bd7, we reach well-known theoretical positions in which Black, as a rule, gains active counterplay) 11...♖bd7 12.♗d1!? – It is essential for White to preserve his light-squared bishop. 12...♖e5 13.♗e2± – White has only a slight but very stable positional edge, based on his space advantage and his powerful bishop pair. Black has no chance of organizing counterplay and White has excellent prospects of seizing the initi-

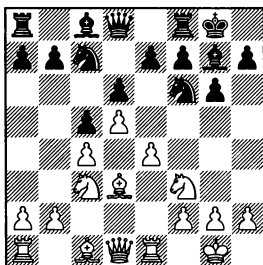
ative, for example: 13...a6 14.a4 ♗c7 15.f4 ♖ed7 16.♗d3!? ♗ae8 17.♗d2 ♗e7 18.♗ae1 ♗fe8 19.♗d1 ♖h8 20.♗xe7 ♗xe7 21.♗e1 ♖b6 22.♗xe7 ♗xe7 23.g4 ♖fd7 24.b3 ♖c8 25.a5 ♖g8 26.♖g2 ♖f8 27.♗e4 ♗d4 28.♗xe7+ ♖xe7 29.♖f3± ♖f6 30.♖e2 ♖d7 31.♖d3 ♖e7 32.♖a4 ♖c8 33.g5 ♖g8?! 34.♗g4+ ♖c7 35.f5+- N.Spiridonov – Becqnerelle, Bethune 1992.

7...♖a6 This move looks rather awkward, because Black will find it difficult to benefit from posting his knight on the a6-square. 8.0-0 – This is White's simplest response (he also retains the better chances after 8.h3 ♖c7 9.♗g5 h6 10.♗e3 ♖h7 11.♗d2±, when the misplacement of Black's knight on c7 is quite obvious, Shirov – Smirin, Riga 1987.)



8...♖c7 (if 8...♗g4 9.h3 ♗xf3 10.♗xf3± Black's position is passive and prospectless without his light-squared bishop; 8...e5 9.dxe6!? 9...♗xe6 10.h3!?± White maintains a stable advantage, thanks to his opponent's weak backward d6-pawn and the mis-

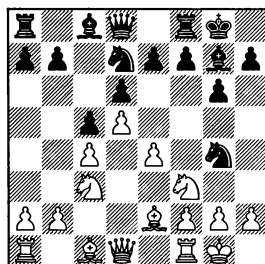
placed knight on a6; 9.a3±; 9... fxe6 10.e5!? dxex5 11.a3± Reshevsky – Vezzosi, Lugano 1988) 9.♞e1±



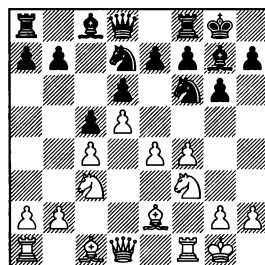
The position of Black's knight on c7 looks passive and prospectless, while White will increase his space advantage by advancing with e4-e5. All these factors provide him with good chances of developing an initiative and increasing his stable positional advantage. Now Black has tried 9...♙g4 (if 9...e5 10.a3!↑ White plans b2-b4, developing an initiative on the queenside, while Black's kingside counterplay, based on f7-f5, is obviously too slow) 10.h3 ♙xf3 11.♞xf3 e5 (11...♞d7 12.♞d1!±) 12.h4 ♞d7 13.♙g5 ♞ce8 14.a4 h6 15.♙d2 ♞g4 16.♞xg4 ♞xg4 17.f3 ♞gf6 18.a5 ♞c7 19.g4 h5 20.g5 ♞d7 21.♙f1± Cvitan – Habibi, Geneva 1993.

7...♞bd7 – This move does not seem quite logical for Black, since it blocks the h3-c8 diagonal for his bishop. 8.0-0!? This is White's simplest response (he does not need to waste any time preventing the manoeuvre

♞f6-g4-e5 with the move 8.h3) 8...♞g4 (after 8...e6 or 8...e5, White continues with 9.dxe6 fxe6 10.♙e2!? and Black will have problems owing to the vulnerability of his d6-pawn, for example: 10...♞e7 11.♞d3↑) 9.♙e2



9...♞ge5 (it is no good for Black to play the waiting move 9...♞e8 10.h3 10...♞ge5 11.♞e1 ♞f6 12.f4 ♞ed7 13.♞f3± and White has further consolidated his positional advantage; or 10...♞gf6 11.♙f4±) 10.♞e1!? (10.♞d2 g5!?) 10... ♞f6 (10...♞b6 11.a4 a5 12.♞b3↑) 11.f4 ♞ed7 12.♞f3 with clearly the better prospects.



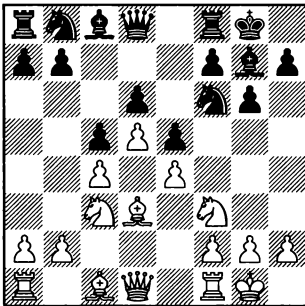
This position can arise from the Four Pawns Attack in the King's Indian Defence after the moves 1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 g6 3.♞c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.f4 0-0 6.♞f3 c5 7.d5

2...c5 3.d5 d6 4.♟c3 g6 5.e4 ♟g7 6.♟d3

♟bd7 (7...e6!∞) 8.♟e2, but with an extra tempo for White – he has castled kingside in our variation. Furthermore in the King's Indian Defence the move 7...♟bd7 is second-rate compared with 7...e6!∞

8.0–0

It is less logical for White to play 8.h3, since the variations after 8...♟bd7 9.g4 are rather murky.



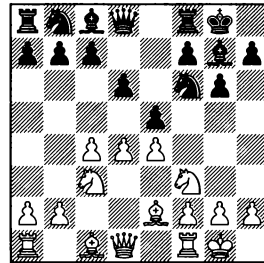
8...♟h5

We have reached a King's Indian position but in a somewhat inferior version for Black, because he has played c7–c5 too early. This enables White to seize the initiative more quickly, by attacking on the queenside with a3 and b4. For example, after 8...♟bd7 9.a3 ♟e8 10.b4↑; or 8...♟e8 9.a3 f5 10.b4↑ White's queenside initiative is proceeding smoothly.

We should also mention that in comparison with the usual King's Indian set-ups, here White's bishop on d3 is more ac-

tive than on the e2-square. In the King's Indian Defence itself it is not so straightforward for White to develop his bishop to d3, for example in the variation 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 ♟g7 4.e4 d6 5.♟d3 ♟c6 6.♟ge2 e5 7.d5 ♟c6–d4! Black gains an excellent position.

It is also reasonable to compare the positions we are analysing with the Classical Variation of the King's Indian Defence – after 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 ♟g7 4.e4 d6 5.♟f3 0–0 6.♟e2 e5 7.d5 and 1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 ♟g7 4.e4 d6 5.♟f3 0–0 6.♟e2 e5 7.0–0

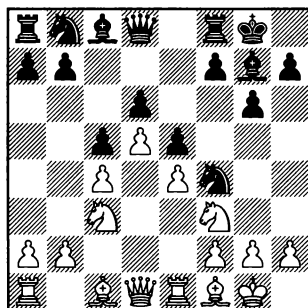


7...♟bd7 (Black's most promising line is 7...♟c6 8.d5 ♟e7, with counterplay on the kingside, while the move 7...♟bd7 leads to positions with a slight edge for White) 8.♟e1 c6 9.♟f1 a5 10.♟ab1 ♟fe8 11.d5 Black's pawn has not been advanced to c5 and he thus has many more possibilities of organizing counterplay.

9.♟e1

White clears the f1-square for his light-squared bishop.

9...♟f4 10.♟f1±



Black's knight looks very active on f4; nevertheless, his position is inferior, because he has difficulties in advancing with f7-f5, while White will continue with his standard plan with a3 and b4, developing his queenside initia-

tive. After the immediate 10...f5?! a good line for White is 11.g3 fxe4 (11...d5 12.g3! f4 13.gxc8 ♖xc8 14.dg5!) 12.dxe4 d5 (there is another drawback of the move c7-c5 in comparison to the standard King's Indian pawn-structures – the problem of the absence of protection of the d6-pawn is highlighted in the variation 12...d3+? 13.gxh3 gxh3 14.dfg5 and Black cannot play 14...♗d7 on account of 15.dxh3 ♗xh3 16.dxd6+–, while after 14...g5 15.d6+– he cannot avoid material loss) 13.dfg5± or as 11.d2!? fxe4 (White was threatening g3.) 12.dxe4±

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Alexey Dreev is one of the most popular contemporary Russian grandmasters. He was twice World junior champion (under 16) in 1983 and 1984, silver medalist under 20 in 1984, European champion under 20 in 1988.

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